"Growth in the knowledge of our Lord."

MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR,

EXCLUSIVE OF THOSE FOR EACH FESTIVAL, DAY OF RETREAT, ETC.

Adapted from the French Original

OF THE

ABBÉ DE BRANDT,

BY A "DAUGHTER OF THE CROSS".

VOLUME I.

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Dedicated

(by Permission)

TO

The Right Reverend Leo Meurin, S.J.,

Bishop of Bombay.

In grateful acknowledgment

of the kindness of a much esteemed friend:

of the counsel of a revered Father

in

Jesus Christ.

PREFACE.

THESE Meditations have been adapted from the French original of the Abbé de Brandt for the use, primarily, of Religious; but it is believed that devout Catholics, whose several vocations detain them in the world, may also find them helpful. The idea of publishing them in English has been suggested by the felt scarcity of Meditations (daily and occasional) in our own language. In these, the Method of Saint Ignatius is followed. The original received the approbation of the late Bishop of Amiens; and of the Meditations in their present form the Bishop of Salford thus writes:—"They appear to me to be very sensible, solid, and to the point. They are conveniently short, and at the same time suggestive." It is hoped that they may prove useful to many who desire to "grow in the knowledge of our Lord".

SISTER MARY FIDELIS,
Daughter of the Cross.

ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT,
BURY.
FEAST OF ST. IGNATIUS
1882.

Laudetur Jesus Christus.

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ERRATA.

Page 41, line 13, *for* "became God" *read* "was God"
,, 114, ,, 17, *for* "did not satisfy His love." *read* "did not limit His love."
,, 184, ,, 6, *for* "Nazareth :" *read* "Bethlehem :"
,, 272, ,, 10, *for* "not to possess !" *read* "not possess !"

Nihil obstat.

LAURENTIUS JOHNSON,
Censor Deputatus.

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Card. Archiep. Westmonast.

Die 8 Sept., 1882.

PRAYERS.

OUR Father, Who art in Heaven; hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners; now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
Body of Christ, save me;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me;
Water from the Side of Christ, wash me;
Passion of Christ, strengthen me;
O Good Jesus, hear me;
Within Thy Wounds, hide me;
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee;
From the malignant enemy, defend me;

In the hour of my death, call me; and bid me come to Thee, that with Thy Angels and Saints I may praise Thee, for all eternity. Amen.

O GOD, Who didst teach the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that we may, by the gifts of the same Spirit, be always truly wise, and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TAKE, O Lord, and receive my memory, my understanding, my whole will: all that I have, all that I am, I give to Thee; to be made use of, according to Thy good pleasure. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace: with these I am rich enough.

O JESUS, living in Mary, come Thou and live in my soul;—by Thy Spirit of Holiness,—in the fulness of Thy Strength,—in the perfection of Thy Virtues,—in the power of Thy Truth,—and by communicating to me Thy mysterious Graces. Deliver me from all the enemies of my salvation; and govern me by Thy Spirit, to the glory of Thy Father. Amen.

O LOVING Jesus! open Thy Sacred Heart to me, show me Its charms, unite me to It for ever: may every breath I draw, every beating of my heart, be so many proofs of my love; and remind Thee, that I belong entirely to Thee, O Lord. Receive graciously, O my God, the small amount of good I am able to do each day; so that I may bless Thee in this life, and praise Thee for all eternity. Amen.

O GOD, Who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, didst prepare a fit habitation for Thy Son, we beseech Thee, that as by the foreseen Death of her same Son, Thou didst preserve her pure from all spot, so Thou wilt likewise grant, that by her intercession we may be made free from sin, and attain unto Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WE fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

MEDITATIONS.

First Week in Advent.—Sunday.

On the Imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.—ROMANS VIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us listen to the Voice of God, as He speaks to each one of us, saying: This is My Beloved Son,—hear ye Him.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Jesus, Light of the World, Who didst come to be the Model of all Christians; grant us the grace to understand how necessary it is for us to know Thee; to love Thee; and to imitate Thee.

I. POINT.

We ought to imitate Jesus Christ; because we are Christians, and because we are religious persons.

It is an article of Faith, as Saint Paul says, that, in order to be saved, we must resemble Jesus our Saviour. Let us consider, in the first place, that this resemblance, which is necessary to salvation, is produced by the imitation of our Divine Lord; it is required of all Christians to follow His example. The beautiful title of Christian in itself teaches

this duty, for it signifies disciple, or imitator of Christ. Saint Paul says: *You who are baptised have put on Jesus Christ*, that is to say, you have received in baptism His sanctifying grace, His life, and a likeness to Him; but we can preserve all this in ourselves, only by constantly copying our Adorable Master. The same Apostle adds, that Jesus Christ is the Seal of God, that He must imprint His mark on us, that we may be transformed into His own Likeness. Let us labour then to advance in the practice of all His virtues until His Divine Image shall be formed perfectly within us. Our progress in the spiritual life depends chiefly on our following in the Footsteps of Jesus Christ, *Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by Him;* and again, *He is the Door; so that by Him if any man enters in, he shall be saved.* This is why we are not actuated by a right spirit, if we would go to God by easy and pleasant paths, and do not walk in the way marked out by our Divine Saviour.

II. POINT.

To imitate Jesus Christ we must make the meditation of His Mysteries and Life our chief happiness.

A good painter, who desires to make a life-like picture of a person, takes care to place him in a favourable light, so that he may be able to catch the expression of all the features. Let us do the same, in order to copy into ourselves our Heavenly Pattern; in the quietude and silence of prayer let us contemplate Him with deep attention, and study His characteristics, His actions; in short, the whole tenor of His Life. This study, although a most holy one, would be insufficient, if it ended only in a superficial knowledge of our Lord; we should reproduce in ourselves the very life of

Jesus, in our mind, our heart, our conduct, so that in seeing us, in listening to our conversation, it might be evident to all, that our Adorable Lord was speaking and acting in us. Oh! how sublime is our vocation! How noble is the task it imposes upon us! Where are we with regard to this task? Is it yet begun? Have we the reproduction of the life of Jesus in our own conduct really at heart? Are there in it already some points of similarity to the Divine Model? Is there not much that is in opposition to His goodness, His humility, His patience? Do our prayers resemble His in reverence and fervour? Do our words breathe forth a like sweetness, gentleness, and charity? Do we perform all our actions with a holy intention? Must we not own that we are still far from resembling our Divine Pattern?

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

Adorable Heart of Jesus, Which dost burn for us with the most ardent love, communicate to me somewhat of Its ardour. Deign, O Saviour, to be Thyself my Master in the study that I am about to make of Thy life and of Thy virtues. I promise Thee that I will strive to be docile in receiving Thy heavenly teaching. Thou art, O Jesus, the Seal of the Eternal Father, with which Thou has marked me for Thine own. Do Thou engrave Thy Image on my heart and on all the powers of my soul; touch Thou my eyes, to sanctify my sense of seeing; my mouth, to consecrate all my words; my mind, to purify my thoughts; my will, to rule my affections; my body and my soul, thereon to imprint Thy own love for humility, purity, charity, and all other virtues.

RESOLUTION.

To apply myself to imitate Jesus Christ, and particularly

with regard to that virtue, which is the most opposed to the fault into which I fall most frequently.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

First Week in Advent.—Monday.

Incarnation of the Word.

The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a Virgin named Mary; he said to her, Hail! Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name JESUS.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Heaven, as a vast place, all brilliant with celestial light, and containing a great number of thrones, of which many are vacant.

II. PRELUDE.

O, Heavenly Word, Who didst become Man to vindicate the glory of Thy Father, and to procure our salvation; deign, we beseech Thee, to fill our hearts with the ardent zeal which consumed Thine; so that, after Thy example, and to fulfil the end of our vocation, we may work for the glory of God and the salvation of our souls.

I. POINT.

The motives which caused the Son of God to become

Incarnate were, the glory of His Father, and the salvation of men.

We see the Adorable Word, equal in all things to His Father, about to become man. What was the motive which caused Him thus to abase Himself? He saw the Eternal Majesty of God outraged by the sins of men; the human race lost, and quite unable to repair its own miserable condition. He loved His Father, He would glorify Him; He loved, and would save mankind. It was to work out these two grand acts of reparation, that He was made Man; for this He would labour during His lifetime on earth; endure the Passion, and die at last upon the Cross. Here we see the reasons for this first step on the part of the Son of God, and of the mysteries consequent upon it. Let us examine His motive:—that which caused Him to conceive such a plan, could be nothing else but the love of God for fallen man; and His desire to repeople heaven with the redeemed out of every nation of the earth. Let us adore our God, made Man; and, with His Holy Mother Mary, let us love Him. We ought to do so, because we are Christians; we ought to do so still more, as religious persons. What are the sentiments of our hearts on this subject? Are we penetrated with the desire of copying our Lord, even as Mary and the Saints have done? We must ask Jesus to fill us with the zeal and the love which animated Him; and placing ourselves beneath His standard, labour with Him in a spirit of thankfulness and of love, for God's glory, and our own salvation.

II. Point.

The Son of God was so deeply impressed with the sense of His two-fold mission, that in order to accomplish it, He imposed upon Himself the highest sacrifices.

We judge of the generosity of a resolution, by the greatness of the sacrifice and the labour which it involves. Let us then judge, if we can, what must have been the weightiness of that motive, which caused the Word to become Incarnate. He, Who is God, resolved to become Man, to unite our human nature to Himself, so that He might humble Himself and die. The first act of Jesus Christ at the moment of His Conception was to devote Himself to the holy Will of His Father. Saint Paul tells us that He repeated those words of the Psalm, which contain this offering of Himself:—*Wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith: Sacrifice and oblation, Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou fitted to Me, holocausts for sin did not please Thee, then said I, behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me: that I would do Thy Will. O my God, I have desired it and Thy law in the midst of My Heart.* Little though a soul may be illuminated by the the light of faith, little though it may be affected by the inspirations of grace, it cannot fail to perceive the extent of the devotedness of Jesus Christ in this single act;—an act of the most perfect obedience;—an act of the greatest humility;—an act of charity, incomprehensible to man;—an act of self-annihilation on the part of a Victim destined to be wholly sacrificed and consumed;—an act of the most profound adoration to the Supreme Majesty of God. The whole of our Lord's Life was but a development—an extension of this first act; and the mystery of the Incarnation is the first link in that chain of abasement and suffering which reached from the beginning to the end of the Divine Saviour's thirty-three years on earth. Each one should consider to what degree he is animated with zeal for the glory of God, and the saving of his own soul. What has this zeal made us undertake? Has it caused us to accept sacrifices as they

present themselves? Are we, in real earnest, labouring for the accomplishment of the good pleasure of God, and to sanctify ourselves?

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

O Heavenly Word, Eternal Wisdom, Who judgest all things according to truth; I adore Thee from the depths of my heart. How is it, Divine Saviour, that whilst Thou didst estimate the glory of Thy Father and the salvation of the world at so high a price, as to sacrifice Thyself entirely to promote the one and the other, that I seem to understand so little of the importance of these two grand principles? Hitherto I have made such weak efforts to render myself worthy to participate in the infinite merits of Thy Holy Incarnation! O Lord, grant that, sharing in Thy zeal, I may sacrifice myself for the glory of Thy Heavenly Father, and the salvation of my soul, and the souls of others.

RESOLUTION.

To do, this day, all my actions in union with the Incarnate Word.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.

PRAYER.

Our Father and Hail Mary.

First Week in Advent.—Tuesday.

The Love of God for Men in the Mystery of the Incarnation.

The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a Virgin named Mary.—S. Luke i.

I. Prelude.

Let us represent to ourselves the earth, full of crime, and under the tyrannical power of the devil, who sought to effect the loss of mankind by making him his complete slave.

II. Prelude.

O God, Who art Love, grant that we may know and love Thee.

I. Point.

The Angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to announce to her the great mercy that God would show to the human race. The Adorable Trinity, having created man to Their Image, conceived in Their infinite goodness a deep compassion at the sight of the miseries which had overwhelmed him since his fall. They formed the project of re-establishing him in justice by giving him a Redeemer, and this for the purpose of restoring him to a participation in Their eternal glory and happiness. God the Father sent His Son, Who was the figure of His Substance. Saint John says: *By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His Only-begotten Son into the world that we may live by Him.* God the Son offered Himself for our ransom. By the operation of God the Holy Ghost that Divine Humanity was formed, Which was to be sacrificed

for love of man. It was to carry out this wondrous scheme of infinite mercy that the Word became Incarnate, and that He came to dwell amongst us. O how immense is the love of God, how incomprehensible His charity! Why is this not better understood and appreciated by all those whom Thou didst come to save? How is it that our entire life is not consecrated to Thy love? Can we not respond to it more generously, and give real proofs of our devotedness to Thee?

II. POINT.

The infinite goodness of God, manifested in this wonderful mystery of the Incarnation, demands, on our part, the liveliest gratitude.

God, in the Incarnation, has shown to men how much He loves them, and His love for them changes not. It is always the same. By a movement of His unspeakable goodness towards us, He has willed to unite Himself to us by the ties of divine charity. That is to say: God, moved by mercy and love, has humbled Himself to our nothingness, and has loved us solely because of His immense goodness; He has united Himself to our nature, and raised us up to His Divinity, He has given so sublime an impulse to our love, that it soars towards Him as to its last end. What a subject of admiration, joy, and thankfulness! how it elevates the heart towards God. Each one of us may therefore say:—it was for love of me that our Lord has accomplished the august mystery of the Incarnation, and with Saint Paul may exclaim: *He has loved me, and delivered Himself for me.* It is for us that He has wrought such great wonders; He had us especially in view when He became Man; at that moment He allotted to some the particular grace of a religious vocation. Here is a motive for confidence, love, gratitude,

and fidelity. How can we respond to this striking manifestation of the infinite love of our Divine Master? May it not be that we have hitherto saddened His Adorable Heart by our continued unfaithfulness? We desire henceforth to employ every instant of our lives in serving Him more worthily.

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

God of Goodness—Holy Trinity, Thou art All-sufficient in Thyself to find Thy glory and happiness in the contemplation of Thine own Divine Perfections, yet Thou hast not disdained the unhappy children of Adam; Thou hast cast upon them a look of mercy, and Thou hast willed that, in becoming Thy children, they also should become sharers in Thy glory. *I will bless the Lord for ever.* O that all may acknowledge Thy unspeakable goodness, that I may myself do so, O my God, and thus be found worthy to render Thee everlasting praises in Heaven.

RESOLUTION.

To thank God for the love He has shown us in the mystery of the Incarnation.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

He has loved me and delivered Himself for me.

PRAYER.

Our Father and Hail Mary.

First Week in Advent.—Wednesday.

The Love of the Incarnate Word for Holy Purity.

The Angel Gabriel was sent to a Virgin.—S. Luke i.

I. Prelude.

Let us enter with respect and reverence into the little house of Nazareth; there let us contemplate Mary, who has withdrawn into her oratory, where she prays to God with rapt attention.

II. Prelude.

Divine Jesus, Heavenly Bridegroom of our souls, we beseech Thee by the intercession of Thy Immaculate Mother to make us perfectly pure in heart, mind, and body.

I. Point.

It is to virgins that God grants His chosen graces, because He loves holy purity above all things.

Although all souls are dear to the Heart of the Son of God, since He came to redeem all at the price of His Blood, virgins are, however, in an especial way the object of His predilection, for in order to become Man He chose for His Mother, one, whose Conception had been immaculate, and who had dedicated herself to a life of perpetual virginity. A virgin Mother—whose soul and body, entirely consecrated to God, had been especially preserved from the very least stain of sin. It is in souls wherein grows the lily of purity, that Jesus Christ takes pleasure. He delights in them: if He does not, as He did on Mary, bestow exceptional privileges, it is in them that he operates, at least,

marvels of grace, they being produced by that intimate union which He contracts between Himself and them. And when, renouncing the world, they consecrate themselves for love of Him to perpetual chastity, He makes them His spouses by a holy and eternal alliance, and He exercises them in the practice of all those virtues which form the future glory and the happiness of all the Saints. Who can ever fully comprehend how lovely holy purity is, in the sight of God and of the Angels? has He not willed that it should be everlastingly observed in heaven? how should the soul esteem herself happy, in thus commencing in this world, the life which will be continued thoughout eternity. Let us consider the sublimity of this virtue, which keeps the soul white as the lily, and pure as the sunlight; which consecrates our whole being, and procures us the happiness of belonging entirely to the Divine Majesty, in heart, soul, body, and mind. Is it not a great cause of contentment to be able to say to our Lord—*My heart and my flesh rejoice in Thy goodness;* for love of Thee I have left all other love, and to give Thee pleasure I have put aside all other pleasures? Oh! who can understand the love Jesus has for purity?—what ought not ours to be for this inestimable virtue? What care ought we not to take to preserve its lustre untarnished?

II. Point.

As religious persons we should maintain in ourselves perfect purity.

Those who have made a vow of chastity, and have given to our Lord their whole being—to live like Mary in great purity of body and soul—ought also, like her, to preserve with extreme carefulness the gift intact which they have offered to our Adorable Master. God forbade the Levites

o put strange fire upon the Altar, or to allow the perpetual fire which had been consecrated to Him to go out; so that when Nadab and Abiu, sons of Aaron, the high priest, violated this prohibition they were destroyed by fire, which came forth from the Lord;—this teaches us, that if any one desire to be as an altar dedicated to his Creator, he should never allow the fire of divine love to die down in his heart, nor suffer that the fire of mere human affection be enkindled there, because God will not that a rival should appear in the temple He Himself has chosen. That which is set apart for sacred purposes, may not be put to a profane use: in the same way our souls and bodies, which are consecrated to God, should be free from all blemish, and serve only for holy uses: let us respect them then as sacred vessels.—May our minds be nourished with good and holy thoughts, may our hearts rejoice and be inflamed with love for our Heavenly Spouse, may our bodies, encircled by a halo of saintly modesty, and crucified by constant mortification, be preserved in inviolable chastity.

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

Author of all purity, Heavenly Spouse of virgins, how loving art Thou! Thy chaste affection is all-powerful in winning hearts. O Good Master, Thou hast gained mine; I have consecrated it to Thee, together with my whole being, so that I may live in holy chastity. How great is my happiness! how sublime is my vocation! I thank Thee for it, O my Saviour; grant me the grace to be very faithful to it, by exercising vigilance over my thoughts, my affections, my senses;—by practising mortification, which is the guardian and constant companion of holy purity.

RESOLUTION.

Not to relax the strict watchfulness I should keep over

my heart, my mind, my senses, but pray constantly for grace and assistance according to my need, and according to the dangers wherein I may find myself, or the temptations which may assail me.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I seek a pure heart, it is there that I take My rest.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

First Week in Advent.—Thursday.

Humility of the Incarnate Word.

The Angel Gabriel was sent from God, unto a city of Galilee, called Nazareth.—LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves this vast universe, then the land of Judea;—one of the least towns in Judea, and one of the smallest houses in that town.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Master of all things, Who, by choice and affection for them, hast embraced the state of abjection and obscurity, grant us grace to imitate Thee.

I. POINT.

It was through pride that man was lost, it was by humility that the Son of God willed to redeem him.

The Eternal Word had resolved not only to suffer and to die for man, in order to repair the evil brought on him, but also to point out to him, by His example, the true way to Heaven, and to turn him from the way of perdition along which he was hastening: for this cause, therefore, from the moment of His Incarnation, despising all worldly show and splendour, He chose an obscure and hidden life; thus combatting the pride which makes us desire notice, to fill the first place, and to rule over others. He came silently. He became Incarnate in the womb of a Virgin, poor and unknown, who dwelt in her humble home in the little town of Nazareth. See how our Divine Master already teaches us, by His humility, to tread under foot the false glories of this world, to prefer humiliations to honours, and a lowly to a high position. Such is the path that we should follow, if we would profit by the grace of our redemption; for it is written: *Unless you become as little children* (that is, humble) *you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*

II. Point.

Our sentiments should be conformable to those of the Incarnate Word.

The humiliations which the Son of God imposed upon Himself prove to us His abhorrence of pride, His love of humility, and how contrary His feelings and sentiments were to those of the miserable children of Adam. Thus the Divine Master, desiring to put them on their guard against the dangerous tendencies of vain-glory, said to them, later on: *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment;* that is to say, we must not let ourselves be deceived by outward show, mistaking the mere glare of earthly honour for real glory, the praises or the esteem of

men for a proof of true merit. We must not forget that to God alone is honour due, and that the only glory to which we should aspire is eternal glory; this we can attain only through humility. Are our views in accordance with those of our Master, Jesus? is our judgment conformable to His, and our conduct in harmony with His own?

Let us dwell upon this self-annihilation of the Son of God, —it is an incomprehensible mystery! and yet it is this mystery which is the cause of all the greatness and all the glory of the Angels and of men. But how little is this understood; how little meditated upon; and, above all, how little imitated; even by souls who make profession of piety, and are consecrated to God. All the Life of the Incarnate Word was to be but the forming of links in a long chain of self-abasement; and we—we think only of exalting ourselves, and adding to our importance. To excel is naturally the aim and object of all our thoughts, our desires, and the affections of our hearts. And before Thee, O God, what are we? The sentiments we hold with regard to ourselves are erroneous and false. The desires which we have of being esteemed—praised—honoured, are but an injustice. And this unreal glory, to which we aspire, is the centre of all that is really worthless. This outward show, this human greatness that we seek after, is but misery and littleness. True greatness, O Adorable Saviour, is to follow Thy divine example of lowliness, of self-abasement, of self-imposed humiliations;—but do we love abjection and desire to be despised? The holy Angels are elevated in glory on account of their humility, and the rebel Angels fell down into hell, through pride.

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

O my Saviour, how confounded should I be at thus

finding in myself so much that is contrary to Thy holiness. Thou didst come to save me by Thy humiliations; and I, who am so miserable and sinful, fear to be humbled;—I even desire to be esteemed by creatures. O Divine Master! do not permit that so it should continue to be; but grant me the grace to follow Thee always in the path of humility.

RESOLUTION.

Not to manifest any susceptibility, when I believe myself to have received some humiliation.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Learn of Me, for I am humble of heart.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

First Week in Advent.—Friday.

Self-abasement of the Incarnate Word.

The angel Gabriel said to Mary, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and briny forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name JESUS.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

We will represent to ourselves the Blessed Virgin's little room. This room is small and poor, but order reigns there: —we see Mary on her knees,—she is praying.

II. Prelude.

Divine Son, equal to Thy Father,—Who didst humble Thyself, taking the form of a servant; give us grace to cherish abjection, and to embrace it as Thou didst,—not fearing the contempt of the world.

I. Point.

The Incarnation of the Son of God was an act of deep self-abasement.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, says the sacred writer. It is this Eternal Word, equal in all things to His Father,—in power,—in glory,—in perfection, Who descended from the height of His Throne, where He was adored by all the celestial court around Him; and He abased Himself even to us, weak mortals, whose nature He took on Him. The Eternal, the All-strong, the All-powerful, came in the midst of men, like one of them He became a little feeble Child.—O Marvel of loveliness! O Miracle of goodness! O Condescension of my God; how wonderful thou art! After having looked upon Jesus, in His Incarnation, is there anything else which can merit our admiration? Can we take any further delight in creatures? It is only the Incarnate God Who can deserve the homage of our hearts. And too, we may put all our trust in Him; and expect all from His liberal bounty; for after having shared the condition of mankind, what can He refuse them? It was to bestow on us all else, that He gave Himself, in the mystery of the Incarnation.—Be Thou our Master, O Divine Saviour, that we may profit by Thy touching lessons, and admirable example.

II. POINT.

A spouse of the Son of God ought particularly to follow His example of humility.

Religious, by their calling, are destined to glorify God, to imitate the Divine Pattern Whom He has sent into the world; and to follow Him along the very paths He has Himself trodden; they ought then, like Him, to abase and humble themselves in their thoughts, feelings and actions. First, in their thoughts; avoiding the filling of their mind with anything which may feed their vanity:—secondly, in their feelings; preferring sincerely that which makes them appear little in the eyes of men:—lastly, in their actions; giving themselves up to the common duties of every-day life, rather than to such as may lead to ostentation. They should keep themselves closely united to Jesus, who humbled Himself to obtain for them the grace of humility; and to render the practice of it easy; they should often have recourse to the Sacred Heart and draw from It a relish for humiliation and abasement. Happy the soul that can thus find opprobrium palatable,—like some delicious food.—How pleasing must this spirit of mortification be in the Eyes of the Divine Master!

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

Heavenly Word, Splendour of the Father, I adore Thee in that profound self-abasement, to which Thou didst reduce Thyself for love of men. What didst Thou behold in them to attract thus Thy regard, and fix Thy attention? they had gone astray in the pride of their intellect, and the vanity of their ways.—To open up the path of humility, and to merit for men this grace, Thou didst lower Thyself to them, Thou didst make Thyself as

nothing. But what have I, myself done, to prove my gratitude for such love? What am I, Thy disciple, and Thy Spouse doing, to acquire so precious a virtue? to follow Thee in Thy lowliness? Where is my fidelity in walking in Thy Footprints? in not losing any opportunity of humbling myself? Pardon me, O Divine Master;—henceforth I will be more faithful in following after Thee, and imitating Thee.

RESOLUTION.

Often to produce interior and exterior acts of humility; in union with the self-abasement of the Incarnate Word.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

He humbled Himself.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

First Week in Advent.—Saturday.

The Greatness of the Incarnate Word.

The Angel said to Mary, thou shalt conceive and shalt bring forth a Son, and He shall be great.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us again represent to ourselves the simplicity of Mary's room; and consider her—this blessed Virgin,—so great in her hiddenness. We see with wonder the Messenger from

the royal court of Heaven, rendering to her high honour, and saluting her, who is *full of grace, and blessed above all women.*

II. PRELUDE.

O Adorable Saviour, deign to teach us in what consists true greatness; disabuse our minds of all worldly illusions, from which we are not yet free; and fill us with Thy Spirit.

I. POINT.

The greatness of Jesus, Son of Mary, consisted in the manner in which He would sanctify His humiliations.

The Angel, in announcing to Mary that she should conceive a Son, predicted that He should be Great; nevertheless He is to be born in poverty, to live unknown, to be loaded with insult, and to die in the midst of humiliations. If one should judge according to human reason, what a contradiction exists between the prophecy and its accomplishment! But by the light of Faith, we comprehend that the Son of God was great in His humiliation, and His poverty; in that, esteeming things at their true value, He appreciated only that glory which is divine; and that good, which is eternally good: making no account of the false glory and riches of this world, His greatness and dignity consisted in despising them, and treading them under His feet. We understand besides that He was great in His humiliation and His poverty, because these were used by Him as means, whereby to perfect the Sacrifice He must offer to His Father;—powerful arms, with which to conquer Satan and his legions;—an efficacious remedy, by which to cure the ills of the human race. Consequently, what titles could be more honourable than His? the Restorer

of God's glory; the Redeemer of mankind; and Conqueror over sin and hell.

II. POINT.

Our greatness consists in imitating the Son of God in His self-abasement.

What can be greater, what can be more glorious than to think as God thinks, to judge as God judges, and to do the works of God? We have just seen that the Son of God despised all that appeared great in the eyes of the world;—esteem,—praise,—honour; and that He chose obscurity,—contempt,—and humiliation. Let us then make the same choice, let us imitate this Divine Model, and we shall share in His greatness; let us prefer what may keep us in a state of lowliness and nothingness, to a condition which might flatter our pride and self-love. A soul truly spiritual, and penetrated with this desire, will merit His highest favours, and interior graces. Let us often remember the life which is eternal; and consider, that the more we have been contemptible in our own eyes, humble and poor in the eyes of the world, the more we shall have of God's esteem, and the higher we shall be in glory, in Heaven.

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

Heavenly Word made Flesh, Who, even before Thy Birth, didst teach us such sublime lessons of virtue, fill me with the spirit of docility, so that, thoroughly learning them, my life may be in conformity with them. Adorable Master, despoil me entirely of the spirit of the world; and its prejudices respecting real greatness: may I seek for this, as Thou didst, in the service of the King of

kings; and obtain it through the victories which I achieve over hell, sin and myself, in Thy strength.

RESOLUTION.

To perform the acts of humility which present themselves, in the intention of overcoming self; such as:—not to excuse myself;—gladly to let it be supposed that I am in the wrong;—not to bring forward my own opinion unnecessarily.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

He shall be Great, this Son of Mary; but through humiliation.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Second Week in Advent.—Sunday.

The Kingdom of the Incarnate Word.

The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. —S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves that the throne of David is occupied by Herod of Idumea, and the house of Jacob deprived of its royal sceptre: we see the heavens opening, and the Angel Gabriel, resplendent with the brightness of his glorious abode, descends, like lightning, into the house of Mary. We hear him say: *The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever.*

II. PRELUDE.

Heavenly King, Who cometh to recover Thine inheritance over the powers of hell, permit not that our hearts refuse Thy gentle rule. Come Thou and reign in all our hearts.

I. POINT.

The kingdom of the Son of God is a kingdom of love.

Sin having caused the loss to man of all his original privileges and titles, had at the same time brought the human race under the tyrannical power of the devil. Under his terrible rule the children of Adam had been subject to error, and to every vice, groaning in vain in their shameful bondage. But the Son of God, jealous for His own glory, and touched with compassion for His erring creatures, came to reconquer His heritage, and to recover these victims from Satan's infernal grasp. How then will He effect this? The Heavenly King will break the chains of their captivity, and give His life to deliver them from death. Neither by the strength of arms, nor by the pleasurable enticements of this life will He make Himself Master of their hearts, but by the sweet unction of His grace, the charm of His love, and by His touching example. Which of us would withdraw from beneath His rule? We, His privileged children, whom He has honoured by making His very own, shall we become rebels? shall we prefer the transitory satisfaction which the enemy offers us, to the sweet happiness one enjoys in the practice of virtue? Ah! that it may never be so with us; rather let us think only of rendering ourselves such, that our God may find pleasure in reigning within us; and that He may surely bring it to pass that we reign hereafter in Him. This is that kingdom of which our Lord

speaks in the Gospel: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God: be not solicitous for the rest; your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things.* And it is of the same kingdom that Saint Paul says: *It is joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.*

II. POINT.

The kingdom of the Incarnate Word is a kingdom of love, and it is by love also that we should submit to be ruled.

If the Son of God, in breaking the chains of our slavery, has given back to us, not merely our original liberty, but also our title of children of God and inheritors of heaven; if the Divine Liberator comes, by right of conquest, to establish His empire over hearts, it is by love that He would reign over us. He invites us to place ourselves beneath His banner; He draws us by the charms of His sweetness; He would persuade us to follow His laws, which are those of love; and yet He leaves us entirely free, for He will not accept a constrained homage;—He seeks to have devoted and faithful subjects. Is there question of deliberation about this, O Divine King? How can it be that there are hearts, not subject unto Thee! At least reign, we pray Thee, over those privileged souls whom Thou hast selected for Thine own—over us especially. Reign over our understanding, by replenishing it with Thy Divine Wisdom; reign over our will, by conforming it to Thy holy laws; reign over our heart, by uniting it with Thine; reign over our persons, by regulating our actions according to Thy good pleasure. May we follow our King constantly,—in suffering or in joy, in the hour of combat or of victory, in labour or in repose,—and may our lives be spent in winning others to share in the ineffable happiness, of being under the empire of the King of kings.

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

Let me continue to assure Thee, my Divine Saviour, of my fidelity. Let me sacrifice all that may oppose Thy reign of love in me. I ask Thee to pardon my past rebellion, and beg of Thee to extend Thy rule over all my faculties, and to command me as my Master; let me manifest to Thee, with my heart's sincerest affection, all the desire I have of serving Thee lovingly, and gaining all hearts for Thee.

RESOLUTION.

To have my eyes constantly fixed on my Heavenly King so that I may do every thing in the way in which I feel He wishes and expects me to do it.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Thy Kingdom come, O my God.

PRAYER.

Our Father and Hail Mary.

Second Week in Advent.—Monday.

The Angel reassures the Blessed Virgin Mary, and waits for her consent to the Mystery, which he has come to announce to her.

Fear not, Mary, for Thou hast found grace with God.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us consider, on the one hand, the modesty of the

humble Virgin in the presence of the celestial Ambassador, and on the other, the respect with which he waits for her acquiescence in the accomplishment of the Mystery in which she is to participate.

II. Prelude.

Give us, O Lord, the grace to understand how well interior peacefulness disposes us, to receive effectually, divine favours.

Perceiving the silence of this holy Virgin, and the anxiety with which she was seized, the Angel Gabriel reassured her; he called her by her name, and told her not to fear, for that she had found grace with God. This carefulness on the part of the Angel, proves the necessity of possessing tranquillity of mind and peace of soul, if we would be ready to receive special favours from Heaven; we may learn here how requisite this is, when we engage in prayer and meditation; for if the most legitimate anxiety is a sufficient obstacle to hinder a soul from receiving the illuminating gifts of the Holy Spirit, what must it be when the heart is a prey to unruly passions? We cannot be astonished then, that the visitations of God and of the holy Angels have so little effect on those, whose hearts are like a sea, tossed by the wind, and agitated by the tempest; our uncontrolled desires, or, perchance, our fears, our disquietude, our over-eagerness, render us incapable of receiving divine communications. If we wish that God should visit our souls when we pray, we must not allow our minds to be disturbed by anxiety,—our hearts to be disquieted by a multitude of conflicting emotions;—if we discover any such dangerous agitation, we should employ the first moments of prayer in regaining peace and recollection. O God, send to us also

Thy Messenger of peace, to enable us to find grace with Thee, and to receive Thy heavenly inspirations; may he banish anxiety, tumult, and weariness—the sad effects of human passions,—so that as a calm clear sheet of water faithfully reflects the sun's rays, our souls may receive the beneficent effects of Thy Divine Presence.

II. POINT.

It was necessary that Mary should give her consent to the accomplishment of the Mystery of the Incarnation.

With this truth in view, let us consider how important it is for us to correspond to divine impressions. The most holy Virgin gave her consent, in order that we should have a Saviour. How long shall we wait, before giving our consent to all that God demands of us, that we may be raised to the sanctity of our calling? How many times has not Jesus asked us to consent to His coming to us, with His patience,—His obedience,—His humiliations,—His sufferings? Let us acquiesce in the Will of God, let us say to Him, like Mary, that we desire that He accomplish fully His designs upon us. O how happy are those souls who imitate the holy Virgin, and with all their strength help forward the designs of God!

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

I ask pardon for having so long grieved the Holy Spirit by my negligence and resistance, when He has been calling me on to perfection. Without further delay I yield myself, O God, to Thy wishes;—I consent to that self-renunciation,—that humiliation,—that poverty,—that obedience,—that cross,—those mortifications and sufferings,—to all, indeed, that Thou askest me to bear for Thy Sake. Bring

me what Thou wilt, O Jesus, but come Thyself into my heart: this I desire above all. With Mary I consent to partake in the toil, the trials, the contradictions of Thy life on earth; being sure thereby of participating, even here below, in that life of love in which Thou dost unite Thyself to Thy saints, now, and throughout eternity.

RESOLUTION.

To conform my will to the holy Will of God, whenever grace manifests it to me.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Second Week in Advent.—Tuesday.

The Silence of the Incarnate Word.

The Word was made Flesh.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELDUE.

Let us represent to our minds the lowly house of Mary: What profound stillness reigns! It is in silence that the celestial Messenger enters.

II. PRELUDE.

O Heavenly Word! Who didst reduce Thyself to silence to make us understand its precious advantages, grant that we may love it;—may we maintain silence with creatures, so that we may speak more readily with the Creator.

I. POINT.

The Incarnate Word, that is, the Eternal Word of the Father, was reduced to silence for love of us. Why is it that the Son of God keeps a silence so complete, during the time He dwells in the Tabernacle of the womb of Mary? Let us listen attentively to a touching lesson, which has wrought in numbers of Saints such wonderful effects. The Living Word was silent;—because He would expiate, by this means, the abuse made of speech in our vain, useless conversations. The Living Word speaks not to creatures, to teach us to speak interiorly with our Creator. It is this divine silence which has peopled the deserts, and attracted to a hidden life so many souls, who have comprehended its excellence and sublimity; and it is this silence which religious persons especially should imitate; separated as they are from the world, and called to a life of retirement and of recollection.—What progress we should make in the spiritual life, if we understood the deep meaning of this silence of the Word! A pious writer says with the Prophet: "I withdrew and established my abode in solitude, there to find many advantages, and to avoid those distractions, which are assisted by our senses of seeing and hearing; that which one sees not and hears not, cannot disturb the soul".—We must love silence if we would become spiritual, and live willingly in retreat, to preserve our devotion. The holy Virgin remained alone in her little room, where

she had spoken with the Angel who had been sent to her from God;—we must do the same, if we desire that the Angel of the Lord should come from Him to talk with us,—to guard our souls,—and to drive away the enemy of our salvation, with all the vain imaginations he spreads before our minds.

II. POINT.

Silence is a duty in all religious persons;—a very important one for those who may have, occasionally or constantly, some necessary intercourse with the world.

If all religious persons should practise silence, because it is an efficacious means of arriving at perfection, they whose employments place them in communication with the world, are all the more obliged to it. It would prove very prejudicial to our souls, if thereby we were deprived of the interior spirit which silence produces. On this subject the Incarnate Word particularly instructs us by His silence. He teaches us how to form a retreat in our hearts; and that we should seek to find in stillness, light and grace to sanctify our communications with our neighbour. Without silence, we should be like a faithless spouse, who, searching for happiness away from him in whose society she should find it, ends by withdrawing from it altogether. We ought to think carefully over this; try to understand very well the teaching of the silence of Jesus, and hasten to profit by it.

COLLOQUY—(after the pause for silent meditation).

Adorable Word! the Author and Source of all language, Thou couldst speak so forcibly for the instruction of man, whom Thou didst come to save; and yet one of the very first lessons we learn from Thee, is to be drawn from Thy

long and profound silence. Ought I not to profit by it? I would, O Good Master, apply myself silently to imitate Thy silence, so that I may be led on to that peaceful union, which Thou wouldst have to exist between Thy Sacred Heart and my own, in the mystery of the Incarnation.

RESOLUTION.

To begin from to-day to practise silence in union with the Incarnate Word.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The Word was made Flesh.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Second Week in Advent.—Wednesday.

Love of the Incarnate Word for Solitude.

The Word was made Flesh.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us contemplate Mary in her little room;—alone,—kneeling,—praying with profound attention.

II. PRELUDE.

O Divine Master, Who, to bring to pass the mysteries of

the Incarnation, didst retire into a place of solitude, inspire us with the love of retirement and recollection.

I. Point.

It is in solitude that God communicates Himself to souls that He has chosen;—those souls in which He would dwell.

Willing to work out the grandest of all marvels, that of saving the world, the Son of God does not choose His Mother from among those who were dwelling in a royal palace: had He done so, tidings of His Advent would have been noised abroad;—it is not amidst the tumult of the world that He would make Himself known. But there was at Nazareth a humble Virgin, inhabiting a little house, where she was passing her life in peaceful retirement; it is to her that He sends His Angel, to announce the great Mystery He is to work out,—it is with her that He is coming to dwell. Enclosed within the womb of Mary, He will remain nine months in perfect solitude. What does this Holy One say to us, if not, that we should love retirement? that it is in the solitary heart that He delights? that we ought not to love the world? but to fly, and remain separate from it, as far as charity permits? By this He makes plain His approval of our withdrawal from it, and announces beforehand the graces attached to this withdrawal. The great secret of overcoming the enticements of the world without great difficulty, as also the obstacles which hinder union with God, is to pray unceasingly in the solitude of our own heart. The least effect of union, or of communication with God, which we enjoy, compensates, beyond all anticipation, for the pain we may have to endure in His service. Let us therefore understand the favour God has shown us, in withdrawing us from the world,—let us make

good use of this benefit, and profit by the graces that God intends for us.

II. POINT.

To use advantageously the graces of a retired life, a life hidden in God, we must copy Mary in her union with the Incarnate Word.

What did the Blessed Virgin do after the mystery of the Incarnation had been produced in her? O how much she must have appreciated the happiness of possessing her God! She kept herself consciously in His Presence; her greatest delight she found in the enjoyment of the intimate union that He had contracted with her; she was careful to please Him, and to prove her love in all her actions. We too should love retirement, leaving it only when charity or necessity obliges it: re-entering it with gladness, there to find Jesus: striving, while fulfilling our duties, to abide in His Holy Presence. When charity forces us to leave our retreat, let us maintain an interior solitude; that is to say, union with our Divine Saviour. How quickly should we advance in the ways of God, if we only had to do with creatures, in so far as we could benefit them. What trouble we should spare ourselves; what sweet enjoyment should we experience; and what good we should do our neighbour! Let us look into our hearts and see how far we love solitude; and prefer the company and conversation of the Creator to that of creatures. Do we become weary when we are alone? Do we feel the desire of holding communication with the world? or is it our one happiness to live a life of familiar intercourse with God alone?

COLLOQUY.

Adorable Word! Brightness of the Father, Thou mightest

have suddenly appeared in the world in much splendour: but Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. I comprehend that Thy love for me should teach me to hide myself from the world; that it is in my heart, as in the womb of Mary, that Thou art pleased to take up Thy abode. Yes! having understood Thee, O Good Master, I yield to Thy love: only too happy to be Thy dwelling place, I will strive to correspond to this inestimable grace, and to render myself more worthy of it.

RESOLUTION.

By interior recollection to remain in solitude with God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The Word was made Flesh.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Second Week in Advent.—Thursday.

The Incarnation of the Word is a source of confidence in God.

Mary said to the Angel: how shall this be done; and the Angel answering, said to her: the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.—S. LUKE I. 34, 35.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us see Mary speaking to the heavenly Envoy. Her

attitude is humble and modest, and she possesses her soul in peace.

II. PRELUDE.

Word of God, Whom we adore in Thine Incarnation, Thou didst bring to us super-abounding graces, to ensure our salvation; inspire us, on whom Thou bestowest so many, with entire confidence in Thy merits.

I. POINT.

Our spiritual weakness does not render the work of our sanctification impossible: for *nothing is impossible with God.*

Perhaps it may happen, that in considering, on the one hand, the sublimity of our vocation as religious, and the virtues it demands of us; and on the other hand, the extreme weakness,—the difficulty we find in overcoming ourselves, or in correcting our defects,—we become discouraged; we say with Mary, but with less faith and humility, *How shall this be done?* How can I overcome myself on so many points? How can I leave off this habit? make these sacrifices? practice virtues so contrary to my inclinations? We may apply to ourselves the reply of the Angel, who says also to us, on the part of God: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High* shall animate you with divine force; and produce in you a new life; *worthy of the vocation in which you are called;* for *nothing is impossible with God.* If God seem sometimes to leave us to ourselves,—and it may be in profound misery,—He would thereby make us see, that the acts of virtue He wills we should produce, are to be the work of His power, rather than the result of our own efforts. Saint Paul instructs us as to the principal foundation of our confidence, when he says: *Put off the old man and*

put on the new: for we must not remain unclothed, but clothed with God. Saint Francis de Sales says, "that after a slight step backwards, we should, all the better, spring forward towards God, by an act of love and confidence". One must not give way to sadness and disquietude; for it is self-love which causes trouble and distrust; because we are vexed with ourselves, for not being perfect; and all this arises, not out of love for God, but out of love for ourselves. If we do not feel this full trust, let us not leave off making acts of confidence; but say to God: "Again I have, O Lord, no sense of confidence in Thee:—I know, nevertheless, that Thou art my God, that I am Thine;—that I only hope in Thy mercy:—I abandon myself completely into Thy hands". Let us then learn to have no mistrust concerning the operations of God within us; but like Mary, humbly acquiesce in that which He asks.

II. POINT.

Our past unfaithfulness does not render the work of our sanctification impossible.

Does it not happen that in recalling the years that are gone by, the abundant graces and assistance we have received, the good examples before our eyes, and our slight correspondence with all these means of perfection, we say thus:—"I have too far abused God's graces to hope for their renewal;—I have lost the time in which it was easier to correct one's faults, and to advance in virtue;—I cannot get rid of my tepidity:—perfection is for those who are faithful; I dare not pretend to this!" If such are our sad reflections, can we too not listen to the Angel saying: *Nothing is impossible with God.* He who caused the Blessed Virgin Mary to become the Mother of God, can He not make

that soul fervent, which has been hitherto lukewarm and ungrateful? and that it should produce fruit unto eternal life? He will do this infallibly, if such a one humbles himself, and prays, and seconds God's action of grace, by a generous good-will. Let us look up to God as our Helper and Best Friend, and withdraw not from His presence. By this means we shall learn to love Him more purely;—to keep off the attacks of sin;—He will protect us. Let us take courage then; and never be cast down; *nothing is impossible with God:* and if hitherto, our cowardice has detained us in a state of dangerous tepidity, here is the Divine Liberator, who comes to break our chains, and to prove that now still, as always, *nothing is impossible with God.*

COLLOQUY.

O Divine Redeemer of the human race, Source of all those graces by which I may arrive at the perfection of my holy estate; I will have recourse to Thee, when distrustful and disheartened. For the future, I will take courage in repeating: *Nothing is impossible with God.* However great my past infidelities may have been, I will not forget, that by co-operating with Thy grace, I may yet render myself worthy of my holy vocation.

RESOLUTION.

To make during the day frequent acts of confidence in God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Nothing is impossible with God.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Second Week in Advent.—Friday.

The effects of the Incarnation.

Then said Mary to the Angel: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us enter in spirit the humble home of Mary, and imagine that we see the Angel conversing with this pure Virgin.

II. PRELUDE.

Deign, O Divine Word, to discover to us all the treasures of grace hidden in the mystery of the Incarnation.

I. POINT.

This Mystery fully vindicates the outraged glory of God, and procures the happiness of mankind.

At the very instant that Mary gave her consent, the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished: *The Word was made Flesh:* that is to say, that He, the Son of God, God Himself, united Himself to the Body and Soul, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary:—God became a Man, and a Man became God. Further, we have in the Word-made-Flesh, a Restorer, a Saviour, a Redeemer. What glory in heaven! what joy on earth! Up to this time very imperfect homage had been rendered to God. His Sovereign Majesty had had as His worshippers creatures, for the most part, stained deeply with guilt: but now, in the Incarnation, we see God, the Son of Mary,

adoring the First Person of the Blessed Trinity; we see our Lord as the Vindicator of His Father's glory. He comes,—this God-made-Man,—to give to God the Father homage and adoration worthy of Him; and to establish that divine worship, of which He becomes, at the same time, Priest and Victim. On His entrance into the world He said: *Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou has fitted to me: holocausts for sin did not please Thee; then said I: Behold, I come to do Thy Will, O God.* By this grand act He devoted Himself. Jesus Christ solemnly acknowledged that He was in the Hands of His Father; that He had received a Body, that It might be immolated for His glory and the salvation of man. What a sacrifice is involved in this single act—this act of adoration, and homage most profound—rendered to the Supreme Majesty of God, by the God-Man!—Act of love the most perfect, which consecrated His Life to Him who gave it.—Act of obedience to the Will of the Father.—Act of humility reaching to self-annihilation.—Act of incomprehensible charity towards man, in whose name and in whose stead He devoted Himself. O Saviour, give us to know by what means we may prove our love for Thee. Is it not by imitating those virtues of Thy most Sacred Heart, which moved Thee to this act of devotion, for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind? O God, we rejoice for the glory Thou didst receive, and wilt receive, through the Person of the Incarnate Word. To thee be all thanks that Thou didst send Him to supply for all the insufficiency of our adoration; we join with Him to render Thee homage and worship, worthy of Thy Sovereign Majesty.

II. POINT.

The Son of God in becoming man elevated human nature: consecrating it, and giving it a share in His priestly office.

The God-Man, by His union with our humanity, became the Source of all the praises and blessings by which the Sovereign Majesty of His Father could be honoured. Humanity, thus dignified in the Person of the God-Man, now adores,—prays,—gives thanks,—offers reparation,—and weeps or rejoices with Him and in Him. The marvellous effects of the Incarnation have had their development in all the Saints; the results of their meditation on the Sacred Humanity have been evident in all their works; in their known fidelity to their faith in Him; —in their loving Him,—feeding on Him,—suffering and acting with Him, and for Him. "It is only by love," says Saint Augustine, "that true worship is rendered to God, and we only love, in so far as we are devoted to Him." We give Him a true love by devotedness of heart and soul. It is then of necessity, that they who would follow the example of the Saints, should give themselves up to a spiritual life, to the study and imitation of Jesus Christ. We ought to have a sincere and generous longing to give ourselves to God without reserve, and with full confidence, so that He may dispose of us and of our whole life, according to His good pleasure. This therefore is the principal fruit we should draw from this great Mystery. Let us unite ourselves, heart and soul, to the God-Man in His act of adoration, His work of reparation, His priestly office,—so that with Him, and by Him, our worship may be agreeable to God, and worthy of His Majesty.

Colloquy.

O God-made-Man! how hast Thou ennobled our nature in taking it; Thou hast lowered Thyself to us, to raise us to God: Glory be to Thee for ever. Grant me grace, O Divine Saviour, to keep closely united to Thee, to serve and glorify the Divine Majesty in time and in eternity.

RESOLUTION.

To unite myself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in my acts of adoration, my prayers, and my good works.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Holocausts for sin did not please Thee; then said I: Behold I come to do Thy Will, O God.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Second Week in Advent.—Saturday.

Benefits of the Incarnation.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we saw His glory.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

We may represent to ourselves Mary, remaining alone in her little room after the ineffable favour she had just received:—she was wholly absorbed in God.

II. PRELUDE.

Do Thou, O Heavenly Word, continue to make known to us, as to Mary, the wonders Thou hast produced in us by Thy Incarnation.

I. POINT.

The Incarnation produced the happiness of men, and it

established them in all the rights of their original condition before the Fall.

What immense benefits has not this mystery procured for the human race! Man, created pure and holy, destined to love and serve His God, enjoyed, in His innocence, a sweet familiarity with this Sovereign Master, Who loaded Him with benefits. Sin broke this happy intercourse; the Incarnation of the Word renewed it; in this Well-beloved Son all men are adopted as His brethren; every Christian has the happiness of being called a child of God, and of being so in effect. The Son of God having become our Brother, repairs in our nature the ravages caused by the guilt of our first father. Original sin has rendered us liable to concupiscence, to sorrow, and to death; the Divine Saviour,—by His doctrine, His example, His mysterious life, and the operation of His Holy Spirit,—makes satisfaction for all the evil sin has wrought; our sensuality becomes an occasion of merit, on account of the combats to which it gives rise; the cause of a glorious triumph, consequent on the victories gained through the grace of our Redeemer. Sufferings, softened and sanctified by the sorrows of the God-Man, become precious to us; and, at last, death, vanquished by the Death of the Saviour, loses its horrors; and presents itself to a Christian, merely as a passage to life eternal; the immediate preparation for a glorious resurrection. Can our hearts ever sufficiently acknowledge these so great benefits? Can we ever love, as we ought, Him who has procured them for us? Can we ever do too much for Him Who for us has done so much?

II. POINT.

They who, by a special grace, have received a greater knowledge of this Mystery, and a fuller participation in its

results, are more obliged than ordinary Christians, to see that it produces its effects on themselves.

Mary is the model for those whom God calls to a state of perfection, and upon whom He has high designs of sanctification. His way is the same with them, as with her. By a particular interior illumination, or by a more general insight, He manifests to them these designs, which will undoubtedly be carried out, if they correspond to His grace. They are at liberty to accept them. God acts thus towards them, because He respects the free-will of man, because He is only really honoured by an unfettered, generous love. Let us turn to ourselves. Like Mary, God has chosen us from among a multitude of others, whom He has left in the world. He has sent us His angel, in that enlightenment which made us know that we were His privileged children; called to lead a perfect life. At the sight of so sublime a vocation we also have said to God: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word.* But since that happy moment, what has been our conduct? Spouses of the God-Man, Who was poor, humble, obedient, suffering,—have we made it our duty to share His humiliations, His poverty, His sufferings?—and our glory to resemble Him? to imitate His charity towards others, and His zeal for their salvation? O Mary, our Mother, with thee we participate largely in the favours bestowed by the Incarnate Word;—notwithstanding our unworthiness, we have been loaded with His benefits. Obtain for us to appreciate the glorious title which accompanies our vocation; and that we may, as Thou didst, preserve with the greatest care the precious deposit confided to us.

COLLOQUY.

O Divine Repairer of the evils to which sin has subjected

us, I adore Thee, and render Thee my heartfelt thanksgivings, which to Thee are justly due;—Thou hast made me a partaker of the favours which Thou hast granted to Thy dearest diciples, and of which I am so unworthy. O infinite love of Jesus! how can I love Thee as I ought?

RESOLUTION.

To be faithful to grace, in gaining the victory over some evil or natural inclination.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Third Week in Advent.—Sunday.

The Incarnation.

The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a Virgin named Mary; and the Angel being come in, said to her, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee: thou shalt bring forth a Son, and Thou shalt call His Name JESUS: *and Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word.*—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the whole world, full of

sinners, the greater portion of them given up to all sorts of crimes. Let us next look up to Heaven, where the Adorable Trinity is occupied about their redemption. Then let us turn our thoughts to the little house of Nazareth.

II. Prelude.

Grant us the grace, O God, to measure more and more the depths of the mystery of the Incarnation of Thy Son; so that our love, ever increasing, may cause us to enter into Thy designs of mercy regarding ourselves, and the whole human race.

I. Point.

Consider the persons.

On the earth men of every condition, of every age and sex, are straying in the thickest darkness, given over to the ungoverned passions of their hearts. Looking up to Heaven, let us contemplate the Adorable Trinity, Who, beholding man's frightful state of misery, has compassion upon them, and, in infinite mercy, is about to work out the Mystery which is to save them.—And there, in the little house at Nazareth—Mary is within, on her knees, praying. How holy is she, how modest, how perfect, this Blessed Virgin! The Angel of the Lord appears to her, and salutes her. What great and important things are in preparation! May we be attentive to them, and profit by them.

II. Point.

Listen to the words in connexion with this Mystery.

The words of the unfortunate dwellers on earth are as foolish as they themselves are; their conversations are useless or bad; they speak of their sinful pleasures, they blas-

pheme ;—notwithstanding this, the Divine Persons treat of their salvation. The cause of this miserable race of Adam is gained by words of peace and reconciliation, and the mission that the celestial Ambassador has to fulfil, is made known to him. What mercy and goodness !—What are the sounds which we hear in the little house at Nazareth? Mary's silence is interrupted by the Angel's salutation; he then communicates to this admirable Virgin the designs of God,—the greatness of the Son of whom she is to be the mother,—the graces of which she will be the object. Mary pleads at once for her virginity, but then humbly submits to the holy Will of God. Let us admire the wonders of this Mystery, imitate Mary in the sense of her unworthiness; and with her say, from the bottom of our hearts: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word.*

III. Point.

Consider the actions of those concerned in this Mystery.

Let us consider chiefly, in regard to these actions, the wonderful miracle which deserves all our attention and our love: that of the Divine operation in Mary, and the miraculous Conception of the Word. As soon as Mary knew the Will of God, manifested by the Angel, she says with deep humility: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word*;—and in the same instant takes place the greatest of all marvels:—the Eternal Word bends towards earth;—He lowers the Heavens, and takes Flesh in the womb of Mary. O happy moment! be ever present to our minds. Let us prostrate ourselves before the Word-made-Flesh—adore Him profoundly,—contemplate Him with admiration, offer Him our homage and respect, with reverential love. *And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.*

COLLOQUY.

O Holy Trinity, Who art all mercy and all love, be ever blessed for the gift Thou didst bestow on the earth, in sending us a Saviour. May all Thy creatures praise and thank Thee, O Eternal Father, Who didst send Thy Son,—Thee, O Holy Ghost, Who didst bring to pass this Mystery of love. Oh! that it were given me to make known to all men this unspeakable benefit, and to draw them on to love Thee, and to thank Thee as they ought. In order to inflame my heart more and more with Thy love, I will often repeat, with mingled love and gratitude: *And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.*

RESOLUTION.

To do all my actions in union with the Incarnate Word, and for His love.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Third Week in Advent.—Monday.

Incarnation of the Word.

The Word was made Flesh.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the whole world, full of sinners; the greater portion of them given up to all sorts of

crimes.—Let us next look up to heaven, where the Adorable Trinity is occupied about their redemption. Then let us turn our thoughts to the little house of Nazareth.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant us the grace, O God, to measure more and more the depths of the mystery of the Incarnation of Thy Son; so that our love, ever increasing, may cause us to enter into Thy designs of mercy, regarding ourselves, and the whole human race.

I. POINT.

Sight.—Let us return to Nazareth, and there contemplate the Mystery which is the admiration of all the heavenly Hosts, and the delight of the saints on earth. Beloved Home, open to us Thy portals; that we may contemplate that which, within thee, is so precious. What a scene meets our view! We see the holy Mary, still on her knees, in an ecstacy of wonder at the great things God has done in her regard; kneeling beside this admirable Virgin, we adore in silence Him whom she adores;—we unite with her in her love for the Incarnate God, and extol the mercies of the Lord.

II. POINT.

Hearing.—Could we listen to anything more impressive or more touching than the stillness which reigns in this abode of silence? All is quiet, all is silent, for hearts alone there speak to God. Let us try to understand the excellence of this holy stillness. God, the Father of the Only-Begotten Son, had breathed forth the One, Ever-living Word; and that, in the external unbroken silence in which He had existed. The faithful soul, therefore, to understand better this Divine Word, maintains a perpetual,

interior calm.—We should indeed respect the religious silence to which we are obliged; may our house too be like Mary's, the abode of stillness.—O Living Word, rendered mute, through love, place on our lips the seal of Thy silence; so that our tongue,—on which Thou so often reposeth, as the Bread of Life,—may never, by the stain of sin, be rendered unworthy to receive Thee.

III. Point.

Taste.—Smell.—Let us consider the principles of action in the different persons, who participated in the mystery of the Incarnation.—In the Holy Trinity we discover the gentle goodness exercised, towards mankind, with so much mercy. We may taste the sweetness of that loving-kindness, which Jesus and Mary feel when doing good to others, and begin to be more considerate and merciful ourselves, even as they are to us. In the Incarnate Word, we perceive sentiments of love, of humility, of devotedness; let us enjoy the spiritual delights to which the contemplation of these virtues give rise in those who practise it; we should relish them, and breathe the good odour which they exhale. In Mary we find a love of perfect silence,—pure enjoyment of the Presence of God, of Whom she has become the Mother: what reverence and self-abasement before God, her Son! and gratitude for the wonderful action of grace wrought in her! Let us ask this blessed Virgin that we may partake in her sentiments and that *we too may taste and see the mercy and goodness of the Lord*, and glorify Him with her.

IV. Point.

Touch.—Let us reverentially kiss the walls of the little home of silence at Nazareth,—Mary's foot-prints,—the

border of her virginal mantle. Let us ask her to bless us; and bow our heads, that the protecting hand of our Mother may rest on them.

COLLOQUY.

O Divine Saviour, grant that after having meditated upon the adorable mystery of Thy Incarnation, I may comprehend the infinite love manifested towards me, in so wonderful a way. May I be like Thee, merciful, charitable, and devoted to good works on behalf of our neighbour; and like Mary,—full of adoring love, and gratitude towards God.

RESOLUTION.

To reproduce during the day, the sentiments and holy inspirations awakened during my meditation.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Third Week in Advent.—Tuesday.

Oblation of the Incarnate Word.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us consider the self-annihilation of the Word, when within the Virgin's womb.

II. Prelude.

O Good Master, Who from the first moment of Thy Incarnation didst offer Thyself unto Thy Heavenly Father, to accomplish His wondrous scheme of our redemption; give to us the grace also to devote ourselves to His glory, by a ready and unreserved sacrifice.

I. Point.

How prompt was the offering that the Incarnate Word made of Himself.

The Word was made Flesh, the Mystery was accomplished! As soon as the Sacred Heart began to beat, the sublime mission of the God-Man commenced; and, as a Victim, He offered and consecrated Himself to the glory of his Father. From that moment He, being submissive to His Will, accepted the bitter chalice prepared for Him. Jesus, tabernacled in the womb of Mary, is indeed the Model for religious souls; we should meditate upon this constantly, and copy Him, as far as possible, in His Hidden Life. We should think of Him in the condition to which, for love of us, He was reduced.—O God, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb; and that,—to gain our hearts, and to make a hidden, humble, poor, suffering, solitary life attractive to us: can we then, after this, refuse to follow Thee? to imitate Thee in the practice of Thy virtues, manifested from the beginning of Thy existence as Man? It was at the moment of the Incarnation, that Thou didst begin the Great Sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. Thy humiliations speak of Thy love for them, and the value of their souls. In perceiving Thy zeal and devotion in descending so low to save them, we should blush for our own

indifference. O God! by Thy merits in this Mystery of love, grant us zeal for souls; and grace to contribute to their salvation by the means most pleasing to Thy divine mercy.

II. POINT.

The oblation, which the Incarnate Word made of Himself, was without reserve.

The offering of the Incarnate Word was not only prompt, but without the least reserve. He sacrificed Himself with such entire willingness, that He held nothing back in the absolute oblation made of Himself. His life, now begun, is to be wholly employed for the glory of God; and in the saving of souls: not a single instant will be given to any natural satisfaction of His Sacred Humanity. Such must also be the sacrifice of souls, consecrated to God in Religion; their interior and exterior senses should be employed in the accomplishment of the Divine Will, which they have chosen as their only rule of action. Like their Perfect Master, they should offer to God their person, their will, and an undivided heart, keeping back nought for themselves, nor for creatures: thus will the graces and talents they have received, bear fruit, for the glory and love of the Sovereign Lord, to Whose service they have been consecrated.

COLLOQUY.

O my God, Thou Who wast so glorified by the perfect oblation of Thy Son, grant me, by His merits, the grace of a generous fervour in the sacrifice I at this moment make of myself, in union with that of the Incarnate Word, to Thy honour and glory. About this I would have no reserve. Too long, alas! have I kept back a certain part of the price: now would I give it undividedly.

RESOLUTION.

To-day I must sacrifice to God that which I have until now withheld.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I am the Lord, that hates robbery in the holocaust.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Third Week in Advent.—Wednesday.

The Incarnate Word adoring His Heavenly Father.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us prostrate ourselves, with deep awe, in the presence of the Incarnate Word, Who made Himself as nothing, the more to glorify His Father.

II. PRELUDE.

Give us, O Holy Worshiper, a heart conformable to Thine own; a heart to adore Thee in spirit and in truth, by that interior worship which is so agreeable to Thee.

I. POINT.

The Word, hidden in the womb of His Mother, was employed in giving to His Father perfect acts of adoration. Do we suppose the time was lost which elapsed between

the moment of the Incarnation and the Birth of the Son of God? Impossible: the Word being One with the Father had necessarily a clear and intimate knowledge of the greatness, holiness, and excellence of all the perfections, of the Most High. Therefore, from the very beginning of His Life on earth, He rendered to Him, with profound adoration, such homage as no other creature had been able to offer. Jesus, making himself as nothing in the womb of Mary, rendered to the Supreme Majesty infinite glory. The example of the Son of God, in adoration before His Father, should be a frequent subject of our meditations, as it has been a theme of admiration amongst the Angels in Heaven. We can never fully comprehend the abasement of the Incarnate Word. It was needful for us to have such a lesson as this:—*God made Man*,—lowering Himself to appear as nothing before the Divine Majesty; to make us grasp an idea of what an evil human pride is. It was necessary that this height and depth should be shewn us together, to make us understand how far the creature should humble himself before the Creator; how guilty he is when he refuses to do so; when he resists God's will; when by disobedience he dares to place his in opposition, to prefer it rebelliously. Humility, the first duty and the chief virtue in the Christian life, is, nevertheless, so little known, so little thought of, so little relished, even by those who make profession of piety, and have entered on the path of perfection. It required indeed the all-perfect humility of the Son of God—as Man—to make us conceive the idea of what our humility should be. In contemplating Jesus Christ then, during those months before His birth, we see to what a degree He carried this virtue; and which of us need fear to go too far in the exercise of it, under the influence of an example to be followed by all who are really God's children?

II. POINT.

In order to imitate the Son in His adoration of the Father, we must, by hiding our life in Him, seek to acquire a higher knowledge of God.

Since it was as God that the Incarnate Son possessed a perfect knowledge of His Father, it is also by keeping ourselves hidden in Jesus, by means of recollection in prayer, and in the reception of Holy Communion, that we shall gain a fuller knowledge of His adorable perfections; it is thus the Saints have sanctified themselves; the nearer they have approached to God the more they have known, respected, and adored Him, and attached themselves to Him. Why so little attention during our prayers? why this languor in the service of God? so little fear perhaps of offending Him? Doubtless it is because we do not know Him enough; it is because we have not learned of Jesus the lesson of His Incarnation; to adore God in spirit and in truth, and to serve Him in the practices of a hidden and spiritual life. In giving ourselves to God, it is often sadly evident we did not leave ourselves; perhaps we gave ourselves for some selfish advantage; even in our very dedication we find some motive of pride and self-love. Let us now give ourselves to Him as Jesus gave Himself, for us, to His Father; so that self in us may be completely destroyed, that we may lose for ever all self-esteem, all affecting to have advanced in spirituality, all interested views, all self-seeking. Let us forget self, forget all creatures, that God may be to us All in all.

COLLOQUY.

I adore Thee, Heavenly Word, the express Image of the Father, in Thy act of offering Him adoration to sanctify our homage. Be pleased to fill me with Thy spirit, and

unite us all in that perfect worship Thou didst come on earth to establish. Give me a clearer knowledge of Thy Father, so that, penetrated with that reverence with which His glorious perfections inspired Thee, I may fall down before Him and render Him acts of homage worthy of His Divine Majesty.

RESOLUTION.

To reanimate myself, from day to day, in the practice of holy recollection.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I will offer myself to God as a sacrifice of praise.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Third Week in Advent.—Thursday.

Zeal of Jesus in the Incarnation.

And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the room to which Mary has withdrawn—she is alone.

II. PRELUDE.

We beseech Thee, O Saviour, to cause us to understand, discern, and share in the ardent zeal, of which, for the salva-

tion of man, Thy Sacred Heart was full from the first moment of Thy life.

I. POINT.

The zeal of the Incarnate Word was ardent.

The love of the Divine Saviour in His Incarnation had the same force as it had later on, when it inclined Him to consummate His life-long sacrifice upon the Cross. He saw all the guilt which covered the earth, and the ills consequent thereupon—the multitude of men who were forgetful of God, and perishing every day. Who can understand how the sight of all this must have afflicted his tender and loving Heart. The loss of so many souls, to Him so dear, caused Him infinite sorrow. Already He was suffering and sacrificing Himself for their salvation. Here we discover Him to be the Model of those whom He calls to follow Him, and to share in His sacrifices and in His life of love. Let us beseech God to give to all of us the light that is necessary, by which we may know Him; the love we need wherewith to love Him; the gratitude we owe Him for so many benefits; and that He make us all so good and holy, that His Divine Image may be seen in us; and that the Name of God the Father may be glorified. By representing to ourselves how numberless are the sins committed by man, we shall conceive sentiments of extreme sorrow at seeing God so offended. Each sin, each bad example, will cause us grief; and, on the other hand, every act of virtue we see or hear of will be a source of consolation. We shall render thanks to God for having created so many Martyrs and Confessors, so many saintly Virgins, who have been known by the distinguishing marks of their loving zeal. Let us now examine the nature of our own zeal. Do we see with indifference the misery of those souls that are offending

God to their eternal loss? Do we grieve over those with whom we have to do, when we see them going astray from the right path? Is our heart so afflicted, that we are disposed to take every means of leading them back to God? Do we feel how dear all souls should be to us? On this point let us study our Divine Example, and try to imitate Him.

II. POINT.

The love of the Incarnate Word was submissive.

That divine ardour, which filled the Heart of the God-Man, made Him long for the hour of His Birth; Holy Scripture had prophetically spoken of Him as—*rejoicing as a giant to run the way.* Nevertheless, He waited in profound silence until that hour should arrive, He did not will to hasten it. How does this consideration astonish and confound human reason! How greatly does this calm patience, linked with ardent love, condemn our over-eagerness and agitation. Why do we wish to go quicker than the Divine Master? Why not copy Him? When occupied in some praiseworthy undertaking, we do not like it if we encounter any delay or obstacle in executing it; when troubled, we lose peace of mind; we are not willing to wait God's time, and this because we do not consult Him sufficiently; our natural impetuosity and our self-will animate us, rather than the Spirit of God. We must learn then, from our Divine Master, to seek purely the glory of God, and the accomplishment of His pleasure in all the good we undertake. By resolute self-renunciation let us procure to ourselves solid peace and unalterable calmness, putting aside all needless care, and accepting with resignation all the troubles which may occur. It is thus that we shall serve God with a holy satisfaction and joy.

COLLOQUY.

O Divine Heart, Which from the first moment of Thy existence wast inflamed with a most intense desire for the salvation of souls, Thou searchest for hearts to sympathise with Thine,—I offer Thee mine: grant that my happiness may consist in devoting myself to the salvation of souls by my prayers, and deeds of charity; but that my zeal may be controlled, calm, and strong, like Thine.

RESOLUTION.

To excite in persons, to whom we can be thus useful, the love of what is good, by our advice and example.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Third Week in Advent.—Friday.

The results of the Incarnation of the Word.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.—S. JOHN I.

PRELUDE.

Like the Christian pilgrims, let us visit the place where Mary was, when the angel saluted her; let us venerate that marble slab, around which lamps are ever burning, and on which we read the words: *Here the Word was made Flesh.*

II. PRELUDE.

We supplicate Thee, All-powerful Word, to bless our lives, so that they may produce the results Thou dost desire.

I. POINT.

The love of the Incarnate Word for His Holy Mother.

Love is a consuming fire which cannot remain inactive. That of the Incarnate Word caused Him to shed forth upon His holy Mother an abundance of graces, rendering her still more holy and perfect. Like a monarch, whose riches equal his generosity, and who takes pleasure in embellishing his palace, the Son of God, the Fountain of all heavenly gifts, took delight in adorning the heart of the august Virgin, with purity, humility, love, and every other virtue. Mary, in her union with the Divine Word, is that mysterious woman who, clothed with the sun and encircled with its beautiful rays, shines in so pure a splendour, that she is ever the admiration of Heaven and earth. How glorious was the mystery of the Incarnation to Mary! how productive of advantages! what a participation in divine rights! what sanctity was found in her who had never resisted a holy inspiration! Never had she done a single action of which the Holy Spirit had not been the mainspring. We see how far off we are from such fidelity. We often resist inspirations of grace; we are so little recollected; we follow only our natural inclinations, our own judgment, our own will. Through our over-eagerness, our self-seeking, our secret passion of vanity, and the like, we lose each day many graces. The Holy Spirit within us is fettered, and our souls tarnished by our many failings. If, like Mary, we gave full concurrence to the operations of the Divine Source of Light within us, we also should be enkindled by it; puri-

fied from all stain, and adorned with the lustre of every virtue. O Good Master! with what graces wouldst Thou not enrich our hearts; if, when Thou favourest us with Thy presence, we were as docile and faithful as Mary.

II. Point.

After the example of the Incarnate Word, we ought to exercise charity towards our neighbour.

The Son of God teaches us that a well-ordered zeal should first exercise itself upon ourselves, and then upon the persons with whom we dwell. Let us in the first place, sanctify our hearts, our minds, our actions, all our conduct, and then we shall be prepared for acts of charity towards others. These should be practised, for instance, with regard to those to whom we are united by the sacred bonds of religion; their sanctification should interest us deeply, since they ought to be dearer to us than others. This fraternal and well-ordered charity, in a religious house, procures great fervour in the service of God, the successful correction of defects, and earnestness in the practice of virtue. Let us look into ourselves, to see if we are animated with this spirit of zeal, and if it resembles that of the Divine Master.

Colloquy.

Thou, O Sacred Heart, art a Furnace of Love, the centre and the principle of all virtue. I adore Thee for the celestial communications Thou didst make to Mary. I heartily rejoice that she thus became so great, so holy, so worthy of Thee. May Thy zeal be exercised on me, O Loving Jesus; shed plentifully on my soul Thy graces, in accordance with Thy designs concerning me. I ask especially to-day, that I may be enabled to imitate Thee in the exercise of Thy zeal.

Inspire me with an active longing for my own spiritual progress, and that of those around me. May their needs excite in me a desire to be helpful to them, and may it awaken my sympathy, so that, one with the other, we may serve Thee with entire fidelity.

RESOLUTION.

To work courageously for my own advancement in the path of perfection; and to procure for others the same advantage by my prayers and by my counsel, or by good example.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Third Week in Advent.—Saturday.

Effects of the zeal of Jesus in the house of Zachary.

And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Mary on her difficult journey into the hill-country, and then her entrance into the house of Elizabeth.

II. PRELUDE.

We beseech Thee, O Saviour, to give us to comprehend

the meaning of this Divine Mystery;—grant also, that as Mary was, we may be penetrated with Thy Spirit of zeal, and accomplish the end of our calling.

I. POINT.

The zeal of the Incarnate Word brought about wonderful events in the house of Zachary,—ours also should be generous and active.

The ardent zeal which burned in the heart of Jesus sought only to manifest itself: it inspired His holy Mother with the idea of going to visit her cousin; this she did, bearing with her, into her house, the Offspring of benediction, That was reposing in her chaste bosom. There the Divine Saviour satisfied His love, by sanctifying John the Baptist: the infant leaped for joy in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Ghost; and on all those whom Jesus thus visited, He poured forth abundant graces. Why such favours and such benefits? No doubt because His zeal necessarily communicated itself to all the souls around Him; we are thus taught that true zeal is active and generous. Such then should be ours, if we would correspond to the grace of our vocation. Jesus, by His kindly zeal, teaches us how we should love to help others, in order to attract them to God; how we should devote ourselves generously to their sanctification, making no account of the difficulties and sacrifices which charity exacts.

II. POINT.

Union with Jesus renders our zeal efficacious.

We see how Mary becomes powerful, through her Son, to Whom she is closely united: animated by His Spirit,

she acts in accordance with the inspirations she has felt. How cheerfully she gets over the difficulties of her journey; how gladly she helps her cousin, and spreads joy, and sanctity, and happiness throughout the house where she is visiting. What abundant fruits of holiness will our zeal likewise produce, if, living in close union with Jesus, we act only under the guidance of His Spirit. All in us will be vivified by His Divine Presence. If, on the contrary, we guide ourselves according to our own ideas and views, we may get troubled, fatigued, and even worn-out with our labours, and yet gain nothing by them—because it is God alone Who can give the life and increase. As Master of all hearts, He can change them, and make virtues to grow in them;—with the help of God, we shall gain more in one hour than we should during several years, working alone; all our care and all our toil would, indeed, be entirely lost. Let us endeavour to have always a pure intention,—this only is capable of drawing down God's favours,—and let us, too, acknowledge our weakness, and the need we have of being closely united to Jesus in the exercise of our zeal, so that it may be fruitful and efficacious.

Colloquy.

O Divine Saviour, Thou seekest to shed abroad Thy gifts;—from the moment of Thy Incarnation Thou didst earnestly desire to sanctify Thy Forerunner, by bestowing on him, and indeed on all his family, Thy most precious graces. I adore Thee, and offer Thee thanks for the wonderful example Thou dost give to Thy followers. Thou dost teach me that my zeal, to be worthy of Thy love, should be active and generous. May the zealous devotedness of the Sacred Heart animate my love, grant me the grace to be constantly united to Thee—so that, like Mary,

acting in Thee and by Thee, I may become an instrument of Thy charity, in accomplishing Thy designs of mercy on the souls of others.

RESOLUTION.

To keep myself united to the Divine Heart of Jesus in all I do, especially when devoting myself to works of charity.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Sunday.

Further effects of the presence of Jesus, in the house of Zachary.

As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us observe Mary as she enters the house of Zachary and salutes Elizabeth: Elizabeth cries out: *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour, come to us, as Thou didst enter into the house of Thy servant Elizabeth; touch our hearts with the sense

of Thy secret presence, as Thou didst touch that of John, Thy Precursor; so that our whole being may rejoice, when Thou deignest to visit us.

I. POINT.

Jesus Christ produces divers operations in the souls unto which He draws nigh.

In Elizabeth we see humble admiration: she is astonished at that which she experiences at the approach of the Saviour: in the midst of her surprise, this new and divine emotion causes her to exclaim: *Whence comes this to me?* My whole being rejoices. It is the mother of my God, who comes to visit me. *O Mary! blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb.*—In John-the-Baptist we perceive the holy transport of a soul that Jesus attracts and sanctifies: *As soon as the voice of Thy salutation,* said his mother, *sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.*—In Mary, we find that gentle peace, that delightful rapture of a soul which possesses its God. Directly she saw that her cousin had learned the tidings of her happiness, her heart poured itself forth in thanksgiving: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* Thus it is that our Hidden Jesus, is the source of all spiritual life; He appears to make no movement; yet He moves all, by that silent action which shows itself in us, by the sentiments He inspires. How powerful is this unseen action upon the hearts influenced by it. What wonderful effects it produced in these three holy ones, Mary, Elizabeth, and John-the-Baptist. Yes! Jesus is the invisible Mainspring of all faithful hearts. Let us then adore Him, love Him, and beg of Him to act in like manner in us, by the out-pouring of His holy love, by the prompting of His divine grace.

II. POINT.

Let us consider the wonderful effects of the Presence of Jesus, in those with whom He holds communications.

We may remark in Saint Elizabeth, in Saint John-the-Baptist, and in the Blessed Virgin, the three different conditions in which spiritual persons may be found. First, we observe the great astonishment of Saint Elizabeth,—such astonishment betokens the surprise and joy of those whom God visits with sensible consolation for the first time, Some, indeed, becoming conscious of the Saviour's nearness acknowledge themselves unworthy of it, and cry out with Saint Peter: *Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord;* while others feel themselves drawn by so great sweetness, that they can but exclaim: *Whence comes this to me?* It is good for me to be here, Lord, to enjoy Thy Presence.—Happy the souls who have faith, at this first visit, to yield to its attractions. Secondly, the gladness of Saint John-the-Baptist, expresses the state in which some find themselves, who are more powerfully attracted to Jesus Christ: at His approach they are neither surprised nor astonished, but so enraptured at this great favour, that they give themselves up to feelings of confidence and love. Thirdly, like the smoke of the incense, which ascends towards Heaven, and spreads afar its pleasant odour, so the soul of Mary, enkindled by divine love, pours itself forth in beauteous words of praise: revealing to us the happy calm of those who possess their God in an undivided heart; and the celestial strains, whereby, with her, they glorify Him. Disengaged from all that is terrestrial, they live a life of love. They find all their joy in God, and taste a peace of which the world knows nothing; their conversation is in

Heaven; for them the eternal chant of the blessed is beginning here below.

COLLOQUY.

Come, Lord, come, and visit me; give me an ardent longing for Thy Presence. May I speak to Thee as Mary did; and say with Elizabeth, *Whence comes this to me?* May I rejoice too, in Thy Presence, as did St. John-the-Baptist? I am still but a child in piety.—O Jesus, excite in my heart the innocent transports of Saint John; for hast Thou not chosen me, as Thou didst choose Him, to be the friend of the Bridegroom? Grant that I may find in Thee alone, the happiness of my soul and the joy of my heart.

RESOLUTION.

To receive the great grace of our Lord's visits with joy and docility.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Whence comes this to me?

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Monday.

Paraphrase of the Magnificat.

My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Mary, in the house of Zachary.

She listens to the words of Elizabeth, wonders over the miracle concerning Saint John-the-Baptist, and blesses the Lord in these words: *My soul doth magnify the Lord.*

II. Prelude.

Divine Saviour, who didst give to Thy holy Mother a most tender and grateful heart, make ours to be sensibly grateful, that they, too, may pour forth acts of thanksgiving at the sight of the innumerable graces showered upon us through Thy Incarnation.

I. Point.

The hymn chanted by Mary is an expression of her lively thankfulness towards God, for the graces she had received in the mystery of the Incarnation.

The first effect of thankfulness towards God is the proclaiming of His glory, and placing it above all else. This is what Mary does at the beginning of her canticle: *My soul doth magnify the Lord*—then follows the expression of her transport of joy at the sight of the benefits with which her soul sees itself crowned: she adds—*My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* Mary then makes avowal of her lowliness, acknowledging that all good gifts come from God, and that she herself is as nothing. *He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: Behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.* Full of the Spirit of God, she sees in the Saviour, the salvation and the rejoicing of all nations until the end of time, and she announces the benedictions they will receive: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and Holy is His Name: His mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear Him.* She loves to repeat that all these marvels were the effect only of

the power of God, in favour of the humble and lowly. *The Most High hath shewed might in His Arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.* Are we like Mary penetrated with a lively sentiment of gratitude towards God, at sight of the benefits He has deigned to bestow upon us? Are we persuaded, as our Mother was, that God rejects the proud and exalts the humble? that he sends away empty those who confide in their riches, and that He fills the hungry with good things?

II. POINT.

Mary announces the mercies of the Lord to His people.

After Mary had thus glorified the Almighty, proclaimed the happiness of the humble, the downfall of the false glory of the world, and the promised benedictions on the various nations, she turns her gaze upon Israel, announcing the mercies of God also promised to them. *He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.* We, by our vocation, are especially consecrated to God; we have the happiness of being of the number of the true children of faith and of grace: it is we whom Mary had in view when she spoke of the posterity of Abraham, the inheritors of the promises: it is we to whom she has given the life of a new birth by her faith in the words of the Angel: *Be it done unto me according to thy word.* She is our Mother, we are her children; before our Lord's Birth, in her, we were one with Him. Let us then publish her blessedness, and call her Mother, saying with Saint Ambrose: "May the soul of Mary be in us, to magnify the

Lord, and her spirit to rejoice in God our Saviour". May the humility of Mary be in us, to give peace to our hearts; to dispel the false glory and vanity of the world; to exalt the kingdom of God; and that His holy Will in all things be done.

COLLOQUY.

Recitation of the Magnificat.

RESOLUTION.

To unite myself to Mary in sentiments of joy and grateful love.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

My soul doth magnify the Lord.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Tuesday.

Further effects of the Incarnation.

And Thou, Child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare His ways.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

We will represent to ourselves Mary and Joseph, inhabiting the little house at Nazareth, which had been sanctified by the mystery of the Incarnation.

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour, we beseech Thee to give us those virtues, the example of which may make us useful to others.

I. POINT.

The Incarnate Word, in His apparent helplessness, effectually procures the salvation of men. We shall be so much the more useful to our neighbour, if we possess true piety and humility.

Mary had returned home after her visit to her cousin. The Divine Word, hidden within her womb, prayed and suffered in silence; and drew down to earth all the favours and benedictions of Heaven. Here is for us a strong motive of encouragement, when it happens that, notwithstanding our desire to be useful to others, we are powerless to do that to which our zeal incites us. When the special objects of our solicitude—the young,—the ignorant, for example—appear to be insensible to our exhortations, or deaf to our advice, let us take care not to lose courage; but like our Divine Model, wait God's time, abiding peacefully hidden within His Sacred Heart: there let us pray, suffer, abase ourselves, so may we obtain directly from God, that which He seems to refuse to accomplish through active labours. Does it not sometimes happen to us that, working much and praying little, we make scarcely any advance? it is because God, Who wills that we should depend only on Him, has left us to act alone. Let us have a greater mistrust of ourselves—let us indeed work, but pray and humble ourselves still more.

I. POINT.

We ought, according to the example of the Incarnate

Word, to draw down the benedictions of Heaven to earth, by the hiddenness of our lives.

The Son of God, hidden in Mary's womb, without apparent action, is the Model for those who lead a life of hiddenness and obscurity; if these souls, in a spirit of faith, love their condition of abasement and humiliation—if they apply themselves to attain a spirit of mortification and prayer—they may become all-powerful with the heart of God, and advance His glory by their interior advancement in real goodness. In a religious community, each member, whatever be his employment, concurs and participates in the good works and labours, and consequently in the merits, of the whole body. For instance, if one be ill, or by obedience retained in some low employment, such a one may contribute to God's glory as much as if he were taking part in active works of zeal, in a direct manner. In such cases, we must place all our happiness in complying with the holy Will of God, accepting our position, and offering to God our sufferings, our unnoticed toil; so that He may bless and make fruitful the practical zeal of others.

Colloquy.

Heart of Jesus, I adore Thee in the secret exercise of thy zeal. Thou wouldst teach me, O Divine Example, that to ensure the fruits of all enterprises for the salvation of souls, we must not lose sight of our weakness and incapacity. I desire never to forget that, without Thee, I can do nothing; but that in Thy hands I may be an instrument of mercy.

Resolution.

Let us apply ourselves, in a spirit of prayer and recollection, to our works of zeal.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I may plant, I may water, but God gives the increase.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Wednesday.

The Hidden Life of the Incarnate Word.

The Holy Ghost shall come upon Thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.—S. LUKE I.

I. PRELUDE.

Go in spirit to that poor and humble house in Nazareth: there contemplate our Hidden God,—Mary,—and Joseph.

II. PRELUDE.

Adorable Model of the hidden life, we beseech of Thee to give us Thy grace, and the spirit of that life to which Thou dost call Thy elect.

I. POINT.

We have, as our Pattern of the spiritual life, the Incarnate Word within His Mother's womb.

The Life of the Saviour began not only by privations and sacrifices, but also by a love for us, so perfect that each instant of that Life was of infinite worth. Let us remember that our Lord chose to hide Himself behind the veil of

obscurity from the first moment of His human Life, and hence understand, that it is in forgottenness (or at least in the desire of being forgotten by creatures), in retirement, mortification, and union with God that our virtues become truly solid;—and again, that nothing disposes us better to have a share in the labour of our Lord's public Life, than to imitate Him in the practice of His hidden Life. Have we laid the foundations of this spiritual life? if we have not yet done so, let us take the resolution to look to this seriously. We should consider that the years are rolling past—delay in the path of perfection deprives God of the glory which is His own, and souls of the grace we might obtain for them.

II. POINT.

To attain to a spiritual life we must overcome difficulties, however great they may appear.

In truth, to enter into the hidden life, of which the Son of God sets us an example, we ought to expect that we shall meet with many and great obstacles; because nothing is more opposed to our taste and the inclinations of our evil nature than the practice of this life. Our self-love consents with difficulty to be forgotten—unknown,—to spend a lifetime of privation and sacrifice; but if, in the school of the Incarnate Word, we have well studied the excellence of a hidden life, we shall depend with confidence on Divine grace, in order to surmount every difficulty. It is important for us, therefore, first to love and desire this life, then to attach ourselves so firmly to God alone, that we may count as nothing all the considerations and claims of our self-love; in fact, we must, with a strong purpose, apply ourselves to the holy exercises of meditation and recollection, and of inner mortification; then nature being weakened in us,

grace will triumph, and we shall be confirmed in the hidden life, so precious in God's sight and so fruitful unto holiness.

COLLOQUY.

O Saviour, Who wast hidden in the first moment of Thy existence, I render hearty thanks to Thee that, by my holy vocation, Thou hast imposed on me the happy necessity of exercising myself in the practice of a life, hidden in Thee. Yes, Good Master, I bless Thee for this, and ask pardon for having hitherto been so little careful to enter into Thy loving designs towards me.

RESOLUTION.

To apply myself to the practice of recollection.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

O Hidden God, I adore Thee.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Thursday.

Journey to Bethlehem.

In those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us imagine to ourselves how the whole known world was stirred by the command of the Roman Emperor; and

how all the Hosts of Heaven were gazing down in rapt attention, towards the little house at Nazareth;—it contained Him concerning Whom all this movement had been pre-ordained. His Mother Mary and Saint Joseph, leave Nazareth, and start for Bethlehem.

II. Prelude.

O God, Who didst cause the vanity of princes to bring about the execution of Thy designs; inspire us with full confidence in Thy wisdom and Thy power.

I. Point.

From a motive of pride, Cæsar Augustus ordered the enrolment of all the inhabitants of his vast empire; and they obeyed him.

Well may we admire the profound wisdom of the counsels of God. Cæsar thought only of acting in the political interests of his nation; but, in fact, he was acting in the eternal interests of the Messias; procuring, so to speak, for Him, the opportunity of fulfilling that prophecy which pointed out Bethlehem as the place of His Birth; of making clear and certain the authenticity of His genealogy; and also of His title as the Messias. That which had been from all eternity appointed by Providence, becomes an apparent necessity; and the plan is worked out, which our Saviour had designed, of being born in the most complete want and poverty. How right is it then that we should see, in the events which may happen to us, either the command or the permission of God, Who often makes use of the failings and injustice of men, for the execution of His designs upon His elect; and to procure their salvation. Have we constantly believed this truth? has our belief been practical?

In the different circumstances of our lives, have we adored that invisible Hand which has directed them for our good, and for the accomplishing of His purposes of mercy and of love?

II. POINT.

The wisdom of God directs all for the advantage of those who are His.

If God pre-arranges, according to His own Will, all things that are upon the earth, *so that they may work together unto good to such as love Him*, if it be true that, in order to save one soul, He will perform the greatest miracles, what care will He not take of those who are especially consecrated to the carrying out of that divine Will? and who abandon themselves to its guidance, through the practice of obedience? Saint John of the Cross says: "God loves the least degree of our submission, and our obedience to the will of a superior, better than all the greatest services we could oblige ourselves to offer to Him, in the following of our own will". This is an important point for us to meditate upon. Let us engrave this truth deeply in our hearts; whilst we learn from the dependence of the Holy Child, Who is about to be born, to submit quietly to the authority of others; to execute their commands in silence; to go where the divine Will calls us; to accept all kinds of contradictions; to be composed in the midst of adverse circumstances.

Can we not confide in Him alone and entirely, Who, holding in His Almighty Hands the wills of those under whose guidance He has placed us, knows how to direct them regarding all that concerns us, for our greater good?

COLLOQUY.

O my God, Who guidest all things with infinite wisdom

for the accomplishing of Thy purposes, and for the sanctification of souls that belong especially to Thee, may I not indeed abandon myself to Thy care with unbounded confidence? Shall I be downcast when trials come upon me, since I am certain that Thou orderest all for my good? I would henceforth put away fear and anxiety; whatever be my trouble, I desire to hide myself trustingly within the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and borrow therefrom the peacefulness of patient submission.

RESOLUTION.

To make frequent acts of confidence, and of resignation to the Will of God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

O Lord, I believe that all things work together unto good, to such as love Thee.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Friday.

The obedience of the Son of God to the commands of Cæsar.

And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city: and Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea; to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled, with Mary—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us gaze upon the road by which Mary and Joseph

pass on their journey to Bethlehem, and see the legion of Angels who accompany the Mother of God.

II. Prelude.

Make us comprehend, O Saviour, how much Thou dost love obedience; and grant us grace, by Thy infinite merits, to love it and to practice it with Thee.

I. Point.

The Son of God humbly obeyed a heathen monarch; we ought, in like manner, to obey those who are in lawful authority, whoever they may be.

Let us consider the Son of God, as the Supreme Monarch of Heaven and earth, on His way to Bethlehem, in compliance with the orders of an idolatrous emperor. What wonderful obedience and humility, what an example for us! The Divine Saviour, Who in all points would be our Pattern, shows us by His great submissiveness that nothing can dispense us from yielding obedience to superiors, since their authority represents the authority of God Himself. Would it be consistent if, while we contemplate the Sovereign Master of all things—of all creatures—obeying with the greatest humility one of His least worthy subjects, we should maintain a spirit of independence and insubordination towards those who hold the place of God in our regard? Disciples of the obedient God-Man, we must act as He did towards those in authority.

II. Point.

The obedience of the Son of God was prompt and magnanimous.

Let us observe again with what promptitude and with what magnanimity the Saviour of mankind obeyed Cæsar, and see the reflection of His obedience in His holy Mother. A journey undertaken at such a moment would appear to be perilous both for herself and her Divine Offspring, but such was the good pleasure of God the Father, so Mary begins the journey without delay; before it was ended, and she at home again, the Holy Child's Birth was to take place—it was while practising this heroic act of obedience, that He would be born. Yes, He was born, He lived, He died in the exercise of this virtue, and yet we are so slow to comprehend the esteem He had for it. "I have proved," says Saint Teresa, "how important it is to practise obedience; by it, one advances in the service of God, acquires humility, and cures one's self of the apprehensions one might have, in this life, of going astray from the road to Heaven: for those who have a true purpose of pleasing God, find by this means the way to secure peace, tranquillity, and repose in their souls: . . . because, being subject to superiors, the devil dares not to introduce trouble and anxiety into their minds, having discovered that he thereby would lose more than he would gain." How greatly does the noble-minded obedience of our Master condemn the self-pleasing and the meanness of our wayward wills; let us beware of remaining amongst the number of those who, through being either cowardly or over-wise, find a constant pretext for omitting certain points of their holy rule: rather may we imitate the generosity of Jesus; so shall love carry us over every difficulty that lies in the way, as a hindrance to our more perfect obedience. And should our natural sensibility cry out against constraint, or suffering, or sacrifice, let us cast our eyes on Mary's Son, and journey in spirit with the Holy Family to Bethlehem.

COLLOQUY.

Divine Saviour, Thou shalt be my Master and my Model to show me how to be obedient: for my instruction Thou didst practise the same before Thy Birth. Deign then, I beseech Thee, to communicate to my heart that admirable characteristic of obedience which adorned Thy Sacred Heart.

RESOLUTION.

To do promptly, for the love of God, all that obedience prescribes.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Joseph went up from Nazareth, with Mary, his espoused wife.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Fourth Week in Advent.—Saturday.

The Arrival at Bethlehem.

Mary and Joseph arrive at Bethlehem—there is no room for them in the inn.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the houses and streets of Bethlehem; then the outskirts of the town, where was a cavern that had been used, at one time, as a stable.

II. PRELUDE.

O Divine Saviour, Who in the rebuffs Thou didst then

meet with, dost offer us an example of perfect meekness and humility, give us the grace and the spirit of these virtues, that we may re-copy them ourselves.

I. POINT.

Let us consider the persons, and listen to their words.

We may picture to ourselves the simplicity and modesty with which Mary and Joseph presented themselves at the inn in Bethlehem; their exterior conduct bearing that impress of meekness and humility which is the distinguishing mark of sanctity, and the presence of God within the soul. The inhabitants of Bethlehem felt no concern about Mary. In the meantime, Joseph, in a quiet and respectful tone, besought a lodging for his holy spouse and himself: he received but this disappointing reply: *there is no room in the inn.* Joseph, without complaining, without seeming to be troubled at this, withdrew. Mary sympathised with him affectionately about all the difficulties he had had on her account. What a touching scene!—in the sight of God what significance there was in it! The Mother of His Son to be thus rejected, and without a shelter. God Himself, the Master over all, bore with this rejection, from those who owed everything to Him, and whom He came to save. We have reason to be indignant at the refusals which the Holy Family met with when seeking hospitality: may we not turn our indignation against ourselves? How often have we not refused Jesus admittance into our hearts?—how often has He knocked at the door?—waited there with patience? He has spoken to us by His good inspirations, and we have not listened. Let us consider Jesus presenting Himself to us at this moment, and asking us to give Him hospitality. He says to us: *Behold, I stand at the gate and knock: If any*

man shall hear My Voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me. He now beseeches us to open to Him our hearts, that He may be born therein spiritually, by the entrance of these graces which may soften them, and dispose them to imitate the virtues which were so apparent in Jesus at His Birth. Let us consider further that He knocks at the hearts of all Christians, even as He did at the gates of the inhabitants in Bethlehem; but the greater part are insensible to this visit; and receive the invitations of His grace but to offend Him anew; imitating those who obliged Him to retire into the stable. May our piety and our love make up for the coldness and injuries He still meets with.

II. POINT.

Let us consider the actions of Mary and Joseph.

We must follow our holy travellers, not losing sight of them for a moment; they offer us valuable instructions. Throughout this time of trial, Mary and Joseph united to their humility and the gentleness of their words, courage and calmness in their manner of acting;—although overcome by fatigue, they manifest no visible emotion or vexation; no complaint nor murmuring is heard:—they suffer patiently the effects of their poverty; they are submissive and humble;—they adore God in all. But darkness is overtaking them; the doors of the houses are all closed; they move on guided by Providence:—outside the town they meet with a stable, and retire into it for the rest of the night. If we wish to please Jesus, let us prepare our soul for Him—by being disengaged from all else, despoiled of all else, but Him, so that the spirit of poverty may increase in us. Poverty is the condition in which He willed to be born. If we consider the

Holy Infant, we see nothing about Him but poverty,—humiliations,—suffering. If we desire to receive Him into our hearts, we must resolve to receive Him with all the virtues which come in His train. Whoever loves not holy poverty, will never love, and never receive into his heart, Jesus in His poverty; for it was to make us love this virtue, and to cause us to be inspired by its spirit, that Jesus willed to be born in the midst of sufferings,—humiliations,—privations,—and rejections of all sorts. It was as a Poor Infant that He desired to be loved by us, and to come to us. May His desires be accomplished, so that it may not be said of us: *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*

Colloquy.

It was not without a wise reason, O my Adorable Jesus! that Thou didst subject Thy Mother to so cruel a trial as that which Thou didst share with her on the Eve of Thy Nativity. By it Thou wouldst teach us that the portion of Thy true disciples is—to be rejected,—forsaken,—injured,—deprived often of all human succour. What a hard lesson to nature! how few understand it! Deign, O Jesus, to admit me amongst the happy witnesses of the humiliations attending Thy Birth; so that enlightened by love's pure light, I may discover hidden treasures in rebuffs, and contempt, and may seek for them with Thee;—or, at least, like Mary and Joseph, may I receive them with calmness, meekness, and love.

Resolution.

Following the example of Mary and Joseph, and in union with the Heart of Jesus, I will receive with joy and

gratitude all the trials and humiliations that Divine Providence may deign to reserve for me.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

There was no room for them in the inn.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Christmas Day.

The Birth of Jesus Christ.

When they were there, Mary's days were accomplished, that she should be delivered; and she brought forth her First-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.—S. LUKE II. 6, 7.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the cavern in which Mary and Joseph were obliged to take refuge: we may notice how inconvenient, chill, poor, uncomfortable their lodging is. It is midnight, and deep silence reigns.

II. PRELUDE.

O Divine Saviour! we are about to contemplate Thy birth; give us to understand this mystery of love, so that we may love Thee more sincerely, and imitate Thee more perfectly.

I. POINT.

Let us consider the persons; listen to their words and observe their actions.

What is this that we see upon the straw? It is Jesus, Who has just been born. It is our Saviour, Who, having left miraculously the shelter of the Virgin's womb, has been laid by her in the manger, His crib. What a spectacle to draw forth the tenderness of the heart. Mary and Joseph on their knees are in loving contemplation, and adore the Holy Child with lively gratitude and most profound respect, recognising in Him their God and their Saviour. Nature remains all silent—men know nothing of the treasure they possess; but the Angels are singing: *Glory to God* and announcing peace to the earth. Some poor and simple Shepherds hear the heavenly voices, and following the sweet sounds come, with respectful eagerness, to join Mary and Joseph, and with them to form the court around the Newborn King,—the Redeemer of the world. What love is in this Mystery! who can understand it? Let us approach the Crib quite close and gaze on Him who is All-lovely. This adorable Child is our God; He thus veils the splendour of His Majesty to render Himself accessible to our weakness. Divine Messias! Object of the longing desires of all nations! where is Thy greatness? where is Thy power? Thy palace is a stable, Thy throne a manger, Thy apparel swaddling clothes, Thy courtiers poor Shepherds. O Saviour! what does all this tell us, but that Thou didst come into this world for our sakes alone? and that it was to seek and save us? Since *kings and prophets had desired to see this day and had not seen it*, what should not our joy be who are witnesses of this marvellous Mystery, and may gather the fruits of it? With what earnestness should we not respond to such a

proof of love for us? O Mary and Joseph! lend us your hearts to celebrate aright with you this mystery of love, and to sing with the Angels the hymn of good tidings: *Glory to God in the Highest, all love, all praise be to our Saviour; and peace to men of good-will.*

II. POINT.

Jesus, in being born, brings new life to us.

Let us add to the picture of His Birth the circumstances which accompanied it. Jesus was born in a solitary place where silence reigns, and was found upon the lap of poverty and humiliation. What do these circumstances signify? That there the reign of Jesus over hearts commenced; He laid at once the true foundation-stones on which to begin that spiritual edifice—His Church. He came to communicate to men of good-will, to all those who should be consecrated to Him, His Life. He came thus to teach us that He would dwell only in silence-loving, mortified, humble, and upright souls; that, in order to receive this divine Life, we must banish from our hearts all hindrances to its growth; that is to say, pride, sensuality, unrecollectedness, and so forth. Yes! from the Manger, as from the pulpit of a most eloquent orator, this Adorable Child-Teacher instructs us to-day in the love and esteem of those virtues which He most highly cherished.

COLLOQUY.

Divine Saviour, Son of the Eternal Father, Who dwellest in the midst of inaccessible light, I adore Thee amid the profound humiliations to which love for us has reduced Thee; and I thank Thee, with all my heart, for Thy sublime teaching: the very stable,—the crib,—the poor swaddling clothes,—and then Thy feebleness,—Thy tears—

all speak to me of love and goodness. Holy Child, give to me the life and the spirit of Thine Infancy—its simplicity and its gentleness: make me little and dependent as Thou wast. May my pride be broken at the foot of Thy crib, my sensuality disappear, my vanity be confounded.

RESOLUTION.

To renew with great love, at the Feet of Jesus, my religious vows and promises.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

This day is born to you a Saviour.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Twenty-sixth of December.

Love towards Jesus in His Birth.

When they were there, Mary's days were accomplished, that she should be delivered; and she brought forth her First-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the cavern in which Mary and Joseph were obliged to take refuge; we may notice how inconvenient, chill, poor, uncomfortable their lodging is. It is midnight, and deep silence reigns.

II. PRELUDE.

O Divine Saviour! we are about to contemplate Thy birth; give us to understand this mystery of love, so that we may love Thee more sincerely, and imitate Thee more perfectly.

Application of the Senses.

I. POINT.

Sight.—Consider how the Hosts of Heaven are looking down upon the Mystery of the cave at Bethlehem. O, thrice happy spot! How can we cease to contemplate thy blessedness, how can we leave thee for an instant this day! Thou dost enshrine the most precious of all treasures, for within thy poor but kindly shelter is Jesus—our Saviour, our Life, our Riches, our All. Mary remains, we see, quietly beside her Dear Son. What modesty and recollection in His Mother!—she is ours also! Joseph, so pure, so simple, so upright of heart, attentively takes care of Jesus and Mary. May our love, too, in seeing the goodness and virtues of our Saviour, be increased, strengthened, and perfected. Let us contemplate anew the Infant-God; His state of weakness and dependence—His tears—the straw—the clothes—the hard crib—the mean and obscure resting-place of the Lord of lords. O love of our Saviour!—Thou dost put to shame our coldness, and our repugnance for privations. Henceforth obedience and humility shall be dearer to us—for Jesus had so great a love for them too. Let us again look at the Shepherds: with what eagerness and with what simplicity do they run to offer their simple gifts. It is their innocence in the midst of their laborious life which has made them worthy of the privilege of being the first called, and that by Angels, to the cradle of the

Saviour. We should greatly desire to lead a life, so simple and so conformable to that of Jesus, that we may merit to have familiar access to His Sacred Heart.

II. Point.

Hearing, Taste, Smell, Touch.—It is through the senses that our souls should be instructed, at this time, how to love and practise the heavenly virtues of our King, Whom we have promised to imitate. The mystical silence around and within the cave is broken by celestial harmony; earth and sky re-echo the glad strains, and Jesus, Mary, and Joseph repeat with joy: *Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will.* Let us, also, express our feelings of gladness by joining in the chanting of the Angels' hymn—we who formed the theme of their felicitations. Let us again rejoice with Mary at the aspect of the heavenly charms of her New-born Child; but feel with her too the sufferings from cold and poverty He had already to bear. Let us breathe in the good odour exhaled from the perfections of God, now clothed in our flesh; and from the modesty, piety, silence, and joy of Mary and Joseph. Let us touch with great reverence the Manger and the straw whereupon reposes the Infant Jesus—let us kiss His sacred Feet with respectful love.

Colloquy.

Divine Saviour, Son of the Eternal Father, Who dwellest in the midst of inaccessible light, I adore Thee amid the profound humiliations to which love for us has reduced Thee; and I thank Thee, with all my heart, for Thy sublime teaching:—the very stable,—the crib,—the poor swaddling clothes,—and then Thy feebleness,—Thy tears—all speak to me of love and goodness. Holy Child, give to me

the life and the spirit of Thine Infancy—its simplicity and its gentleness; make me little and dependent, as Thou wast. May my pride be broken at the foot of Thy Crib, my sensuality disappear, my vanity be confounded.

RESOLUTION.

To renew with great love, at the Feet of Jesus, my religious vows and promises.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

This day is born to you a Saviour.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Twenty-seventh of December.

Song of the Angels.

Suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the fields around Bethlehem,—the flocks,—and the Shepherds watching over them,—the shining splendour of the Angel who speaks to them.

II. PRELUDE.

We beseech Thee, O God, to fill us with ardent zeal for

Thy glory, and to bestow on us the grace of procuring this for Thee as far as we are able.

I. Point.

The Birth of the Incarnate Word procured the glory of God, by manifesting His divine perfections.

Let us joyfully meditate on the words of the Angels: *Glory to God.* Who could ever comprehend the glory that is due to Him? His divine perfections form His happiness; their beauty the joy and felicity of the Angels. The earth up to this period had been sitting in darkness, and deprived of the knowledge of the divine attributes; but the *Word-made-Flesh* rose as the bright Sun of Justice to dispel the shadows of death, and to invite us to unite with Heaven in glorifying God. He discovered to us the greatness of God's justice, which, in expiation of sins, demanded nothing less than the humbling of the Divine Son, even to the taking upon Him the likeness of man. He made known the extent of God's power, which the same humiliations of Jesus Christ re-established, after that mankind had warred against it;—and the depth of God's Wisdom, which unites things most opposite—the Supreme Being and the weak creature,—God and man. He manifested the immensity of His goodness and of His mercy, which inclined towards us in the Person of His Son, Who brought Peace and Salvation. Now that earth can join with Heaven in celebrating the divine perfections, let us respond to the invitations of the celestial Messengers and repeat with them *Glory to God*, glory to His power,—His wisdom,—His goodness. *Benediction and glory and praise be to Him Who cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.*

II. POINT.

If it is just and right that all the world should glorify the Lord, our whole life should be employed in celebrating His mercies with regard to ourselves.

Without doubt the incomprehensible benefit of the Redemption was offered to all mankind, but unfortunately the larger number, *loving darkness rather than light*, remained in ignorance of the mysteries of love wrought in their favour, and have not participated in the graces which are the result of these mysteries. Let us, who are children of the light, draw upon the treasures the Word-made-Man offers to us. The participation in the divine benefits which the Son of God has merited for us by the mystery of His Incarnation, renders spiritual souls partakers also of inexpressible treasures of merits and of graces. This it is which Saint Peter teaches us in his second epistle: *Grace to you and peace be accomplished in the knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus our Lord; as all things of His divine power which appertain to life and godliness are given us through the knowledge of Him Who hath called us by His own proper glory and virtue: by Whom He hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature.* Like Mary, we are the objects of the bounty of Jesus; every day in Meditation, almost as often in Holy Communion, we are in His company:—His holy Mother nourished Him, and we are nourished by Him: He reposed in the arms and on the breast of Mary, He reposes on our tongues and in our hearts:—He lives in us and we live in Him. Should we not rejoice at such a favour, and render Him thanks for so many benefits, often repeating the canticle of the Angels: *Glory to God in the Highest.* But to glorify the Lord aright with these pure beings, we must lay aside all that is worldly

and sensual, and clothe ourselves anew with their celestial purity; let us reanimate ourselves in the sanctity of our vocation, and with Mary and Joseph keep so closely united to Jesus that we may merit to praise Him here below, and hereafter to sing, with the blessed ones above, an eternal *Hosanna in the Highest.*

Colloquy.

Thou, O God, didst manifest in the Birth of Thy Divine Son Thy infinite perfections, that all the world might acknowledge this unspeakable benefit, and celebrate it, and find therein their salvation. It is with joy that I exclaim with Holy Church: *We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we magnify Thee.* But our voices alone are too feeble; I will unite mine with those of Mary and Joseph, and with the multitude of the heavenly Army: *Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son, glory be to the Holy Ghost: glory in the highest Heaven.*

Resolution.

At every hour of the day to unite with the choir of Angels in praising God.

Thought for the Day.

Glory to God in the Highest.

Prayer.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Twenty-eighth of December.

Continuation of the Song of the Angels.

Peace to men of good-will.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the watchful Shepherds, guarding their flocks.—They, with the faith and simplicity of the Patriarchs, are waiting for the coming of the promised Messias.

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus! God of Peace, deign to aid our feeble wills, and render them wholly good; so that we may taste the fruits of that peace, most precious, which Thou didst bring to us from Heaven.

I. POINT.

Jesus came to bring us peace;—peace with God, with our brethren, and within ourselves. *Glory to God in the Highest;*—and on earth—peace; a Saviour is born to us, Divine justice is appeased, the time of fear has passed, the reign of love begins,—the arm of the Lord is stayed. If our sins still cry aloud for vengeance, a Voice cries from out the Manger, where the Young Child lies, which penetrates to the Ear of the Father of mercies; and the Voice of the Child alone is heard: *Peace on earth.* Jesus by His law of love, comes to unite all hearts; to put away and destroy all germs of strife;—pride, self-interest, hardness. Peace on earth, peace to all upright hearts. Jesus by His Birth has destroyed the power of the three great enemies of our salvation; the world, the flesh, and the

devil: we have but to receive the fruits of His victory. He offers them to us, in the numberless graces He bestows on us every day. Oh, let us accept this divine peace, which the Angels published; let us preserve it carefully;—with regard to God, by our faithfulness;—with regard to our neighbour, by unfailing charity;—with regard to ourselves, by deep humility. We shall maintain it most certainly, if we are content with that true peace which is the gift of God; and avoid appropriating to ourselves the glory He reserves for Himself. *Glory to God*, let us repeat unceasingly, may all within us bless and glorify Him, until our last breath.

II. POINT.

To be sharers in the peace, which Jesus brought, it is sufficient only to have a good will.

The Angels of God did not say: peace to the just, who are without sin; peace to generous hearts, who are exempt from all weakness; peace to holy souls, advanced in the way of perfection; but they said; *peace to men of good-will.* Be this good will of a few years,—of a few months,—of a few days,—or of a few moments,—it matters not, provided that it be real;—peace is promised, and is given where good will exists. Yes! peace to you, religious souls, if you are resolved in future to fulfil your holy engagements; if your will is sincere and good; yes! peace and benediction. Jesus in the Crib extends His Arms towards you! kneel at His Feet; in His Heart you will find the support of your weakness, the remedy for all your ills, the health of your soul.

COLLOQUY.

Divine Saviour, Who didst by Thy Birth bring peace into the world, and didst offer it to all those who would enjoy it,

receive my humble thanks. Thou wilt, O Jesus, that I should taste the fruits of that delightful peace which alone can give real happiness. By Thy birth Thou didst procure this for me;—but have I yet accepted this true peace? have I not preferred that dangerous peace which leaves natural inclinations and self-love in repose? Pardon me, O God; I will, in future, remember that the peace Thou offerest me is not the false security of the thoughtless; but that joy in the Holy Ghost which springs from a loving conformity of my will with Thine.

RESOLUTION.

To renew my promises of being faithful to my holy rule of life.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Peace to men of good-will.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Twenty-ninth of December.

The Adoration of the Shepherds.

There were in the same country Shepherds watching: An Angel of the Lord stood by them and said unto them: this day is born to you a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David; and this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

We represent to ourselves the Angel who spoke with the

Shepherds :—the brightness of God which shone about them: —their haste in going to the stable where the New-born Saviour was.

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus! Who dost love diligence and simplicity, Who didst prefer the poor Shepherds, on account of their possessing these qualities, to the great ones of the world, who possessed them not—we beseech Thee, let us rightly enter into their feelings, so that we may share in the blessings Thou bestowedst on them so abundantly.

I. POINT.

Let us consider the persons and listen to their words.

See the pious Shepherds, how laborious and vigilant they were in guarding their flocks;—they were poor, unpretending, fearless, and straightforward. God loves the humble poor, and He chose such, out of the rest of the world, to be witnesses to the Birth of His Son. He sent to them His Angel, who called them to the Cradle of the Holy Child—the Desired of all the prophets, the nations and their kings. Happy Shepherds, with what benedictions, with what special graces were you not favoured! *This is the sign unto you*, the divine Messenger said, *you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger: the Saviour, Who is born to you.* The livery of the followers of the King of kings is to be poverty and humility; it is only they who are clothed in these who can pretend to the honour of being admitted into His Presence as He lies there in the Manger. Let us think seriously about this, for how grievous would it be, if in presenting ourselves there, to take our place amongst those who adore, He were to say: *Depart from Me, I know you not.*

II. POINT.

Consider the actions of the Shepherds.

What promptitude and what diligence might have been observed in them; they appear to have been so simple, so self-detached, in following with such docility the celestial call. They set off at once in their eagerness to see Jesus, leaving all that was of value to them, to find their Lord. They waited not for the daylight, but sought for Him by night, in the same moment that He was announced to them. Does not their faith condemn our little fervour in our exercises of piety, and at the time of Holy Communion, to which Jesus bids us come by His Ministers? They are His Messengers, who say to His people: Come and adore, and eat of the Fruit of His Incarnation. May our piety be renewed, and cause us to seek and adore our New-born Jesus, the Divine Object of our love. The Shepherds arrived at the stable:—think with what devotion they entered—with what simple and reverential faith they adored their Saviour, and offered Him their modest gifts. Let us joyfully go in with them; and if our spiritual poverty will not permit us to offer aught of much value, such as heroic acts of virtue, we will present to Him our good will, in trusting simplicity; together with the sincere acknowledgment of our own indigence.

COLLOQUY.

O Jesus, far from repelling the poor and the childlike, Thou calledst them the first to Thy Crib. Praised be Thou also, for not despising my lowliness. Thou hast admitted me to the honour of visiting Thee. I would do this in humble faith, love and thankfulness. Mary and Joseph, it is with you that I find the Holy Child. For you I desire to

increase my devotion, and that you may teach me better how to love and imitate Him.

RESOLUTION.

To seek Jesus with simplicity of heart, and by the practice of humility.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

This shall be a sign to you; you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Thirtieth of December.

The Infant Jesus, in uniting Himself to Souls, communicates to them new life.

All things were made by Him.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us contemplate the Shepherds near the Divine Infant, Whom they adore as their Saviour, and Whose benediction they receive.

II. PRELUDE.

O Adorable Word! Creator of all things, visible and invisible, come and repair in us the ravages sin has made, and give us new life.

I. POINT.

All things were made by the Word,—all things are restored also by Him. We, the children of Adam, had all gone

astray, and might have been heard bemoaning our unhappy condition; we had been despoiled of the pure white garments of our first innocence; the light of heaven did not illuminate us, for we were in the shadow of death; all around us was darkness and despair. The Word, the Son of the Eternal Father, listening to the sorrowful sighing of the captives, was touched with compassion, and descended from Heaven; was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary. We may apply all this to ourselves, for has He not raised us up? healed our wounded souls? and enlightened us by the illuminating mystery of the Incarnation? He has come among us, His Hands full of gifts; but these gifts can only be of value to us if we accept them. It is His Will that we should do so undoubtedly;—here there must be the concurrence of our own free-will; let us then endeavour to correspond to the advances of our Loving Saviour, Who offers to us new life as His Christmas gift. Have we always consented to follow the divine inspirations of His Spirit within us? Perhaps we keep open the wounds of our soul, and prefer our ills to His favours. Can it be that we like better to live on, with souls tarnished in God's sight, and blinded as to their danger, than to receive from the Son of God their cure, and to let Him render them beautiful in His Eyes? Let Him raise us up and unite Himself to us. We will have recourse to His Sacred Heart, and receive with thankfulness His renewing grace.

II. Point.

He was in the world, and the world knew Him not: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

That the world, which had strayed into the broad road of

vice, and was blinded by its own false maxims, did not recognise Jesus as their Deliverer from the miseries of which they complained, nor as the Author of the new life He came to bestow on men of good-will, may be understood: but that those, who call themselves His brethren, those whom He honours with the dearest titles of friendship, seeing Him come,—humble—meek—gracious—should not recognise Him—should not receive Him, this must remain a mystery of ingratitude which human intelligence fails to fathom. Like the Bridegroom, He says: *Behold I stand at the gate and knock, that they may open it.* Do we not leave Him knocking and waiting a long time? perhaps even, we do not open to Him at all. And yet, what is it He asks of us? He asks nothing else, but that He may have the joy and consolation of purifying us from the stain of sin; of renewing us to the Image of God; and of raising us to the rank of His children. If our souls are closed against Him, so that He cannot enter, how can He bring to us new life? and bestow on us His gifts? In receiving Jesus, we receive His virtues too: innocence—simplicity—sanctity are inseparable from Him; the new life He brings us is that spiritual regeneration, which abolishes all the unruly desires of corrupt nature, causes us to be born again, and to live in Him. Then His love is enkindled in our hearts; and we are well inclined to imitate Him.

Colloquy.

Come then, O Lord Jesus, come and take entire possesion of me; in Thy hands I place my whole being; enflame me with Thy holy ardour; and may my fidelity be unshaken. Be Thou blessed—and loved—and welcomed by all hearts, new-born in Thee: knock more forcibly at the door of the hearts of those who are still

deaf to Thy entreaties to be admitted; so that they too may open to Thee and rejoice in Thy service, and in the bestowal of Thy gifts of grace.

RESOLUTION.

During the day to conform myself to the motions of grace, which the Holy Spirit may give rise to in my heart.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

This day is born to you a Saviour.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Thirty-first of December.

Further Effects of the Birth of the Saviour.

The Saviour is born: come! let us adore Him.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us place before our eyes Jesus in the Manger—Mary and Joseph at His Feet, receiving from Him an increase of holiness.

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus! Object of the contemplation of Mary and Joseph, Thou from the Manger didst pour upon them an increase of sanctity: deign to shed upon us the abundance of Thy grace, and the love of Thy virtues.

I. POINT.

Jesus, in the Manger, points out to us the way of perfection.

It is, in fact, near the Crib that souls, called to the religious life, receive from their Good Master those instructions concerning perfection, which should afterwards be developed in them. Yes, it is there that we are taught the great and sublime maxims of the perfect life. It is there we learn to esteem humiliations, contempt, and the holy folly of the Cross. The Crib of the Heavenly Child teaches us to crucify the flesh, to make of ourselves perpetual victims, by our desire to imitate Him, Who for our love suffered—humbled Himself—deprived Himself of all things. Behold Him then—the Model of that perfection to which we are called by our holy estate: let us aspire to holiness, since we are enlightened by His Divine Spirit. Let us often go to the foot of the Crib, there to study the ways of holiness in which we must henceforth walk. Let us go there in all our difficulties and discouragements, so that we may acquire fresh strength to fight against our tepidity and the inconstancy of our nature.

II. POINT.

Our vocation obliges us to follow Jesus, with a generous spirit, in the ways of perfection.

Jesus, by His submission to the Will of His Father, and His generosity in doing it fully, shows us how the children of God should correspond to His purposes in their regard, and mount to that degree of virtue He requires of them. Happy they who are called to share in the poor, obscure, and toilsome Life of Jesus; chosen by Him, they must follow Him, and press on with all their energy along the road to perfection,

for He Himself has traced it out, and made it comparatively smooth and easy. Freely and lovingly this perfect path is to be chosen; and they who walk along its course should do so with courage, and devotion to their Leader. What then are our sentiments? Perhaps we possess so little fervour about perfection that we are holding back even from making the efforts necessary for salvation. In reality, far from seeking humiliation and contempt, are we not still under the dominion of pride? not suffering the least word of reproof? Far also from taking pleasure in crucifying the flesh by mortification, have we even, over our senses, interior or exterior, that control which keeps us back from sin? Let us well reflect about this, and understand that, not to work with earnestness to become perfect, is to render ourselves unworthy of the choice God has made of us, and even to endanger our salvation.

Colloquy.

Adorable Saviour—Who hast such zeal for souls—at Thy entrance into the world Thou didst open up before us not only the way of salvation, but likewise the road to perfection. Grant that I may have courage to enter it, and follow Thee therein. Thou didst lead the way, to attract, by Thy divine charms, a great number of souls; still, by Thy example, are they encouraged to go after Thee in the way of humility, charity, and continual mortification of themselves with regard to all the things of this life. Grant that I too may live in the practice of those virtues which Thou requirest of me, that I may thus ensure to myself the inestimable happiness of pleasing Thee, and of working out my salvation.

RESOLUTION.

To commence in earnest to renounce myself, and enter the path of humility and of self-abnegation.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

First of January.

The Mystery of the Circumcision.

After eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His Name was called JESUS.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us recal how the Angel Gabriel said to Mary; *Thou shalt call His Name* JESUS.

II. PRELUDE.

We pray Thee, O Sweet Jesus, to give us an esteem and love of mortification—that spiritual circumcision Thou demandest of Thy disciples.

I. POINT.

It was in humiliation and suffering that our Dear Master received the Name of Jesus.

Jesus came on earth to save us by His humiliations and

sufferings: thus it came to pass that in the midst of these He received the Holy Name of Jesus—that is, Saviour. But if to undergo the rite of circumcision was humiliating for the Son of God, since He was thus reckoned amongst the sinful children of men, the Name He received distinguished Him from all these. The foreknowledge He possessed of the functions which were to be His, as the Saviour, made Him love and appreciate this hard beginning. The hour of His Passion was too distant for the ardour of His desires; He would at once make Himself a Victim for us, and consecrate by the shedding of His adorable Blood the first days of a Life of sacrifice. What zeal thus early manifested for our salvation! what a high value He has placed upon our souls! Ought we not to be confounded at the sight of our indifference, and of our little love towards so generous a Saviour? Do we not see that it is but right and just we should assist at this first Sacrifice, by making all those, on our part, of which we are capable.

II. Point.

It is by humiliation and suffering that the true disciples of Jesus Christ become worthy of this, their glorious title.

It was in His Circumcision that the Son of God received the Name of Jesus. It therefore follows that to make ourselves worthy to bear the beautiful title of Disciples of Jesus Christ, we must necessarily submit to that spiritual circumcision which consists in the suppression of the evil inclinations of corrupt nature. This must be done, and that with courage—not sparing ourselves in regard to heart, or mind, or senses, or actions. All must be absolutely retrenched that may displease our Divine Master; for only thus shall we succeed in witnessing for Him a real love, which is

proved not in mere words, nor in passing feelings, but in acts of virtue, and in working out our salvation.

Colloquy.

It would have been enough, O Holy Child, that Thou shouldst have suffered the humiliation of the Manger, but to-day Thou didst further submit to that of Circumcision. Can I not respond on my part to such great love by a perfect submission to the holy rule Thou hast imposed on me? and by generously cutting off all that may displease Thee in myself? Grant, O Good Master, that I may spend, free from sin, the year which now begins; that it may be a holy year, a year of graces and of merits. I would consecrate it to Thy Divine Childhood, and offer Thee its first-fruits. Bless me, O Child Jesus, and make my resolutions efficacious.

Resolution.

To make frequent acts of love to Jesus, and impose on myself some acts of mortification which may help to correct my faults.

Thought for the Day.

If any one will be My disciple, let him deny himself.

Prayer.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Second of January.

After Circumcision the Jews were obliged to keep the whole Law.

The Child was circumcised.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us see how the Holy Child subjected Himself to the Law of Moses, and would fulfil every part of it, however painful.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant us the grace, O Jesus, to know how far our submission to the precepts and counsels of Thy Holy Gospel should extend.

I. POINT.

In what spiritual circumcision should consist, in souls consecrated to God.

Jesus is essentially the Saint of saints; for His sanctification He had no need of this legal ceremony, nevertheless, He submitted to it to fulfil all justice; He willed to obey a Law which did not affect Him, that He might procure for us the liberty of the children of God. The religious vocation calls us to follow the counsels of the evangelical Law, to suppress in ourselves the triple effects of concupiscence; that is to say—all inordinate affections: to lay entirely aside curiosity and all that may still remain in us of the spirit, language, and customs of the world. Such then should be the extent of our spiritual circumcision, for Saint Paul says: *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the vices and concupiscences.* The faithful soul, walking in the Footsteps

of her Divine Spouse, will experience the revolts and repugnances of the flesh against the spirit; but by the help of grace, she will conquer them. Without these victories over our sensual and natural inclinations, none could attain either peace or strength; or make progress in the spiritual life. Let us then courageously bear the impress of the Cross on our souls; that distinctive mark of a Spouse of Jesus Christ: —to Him we are consecrated: let it be our happiness that we belong to Him; let us make it also our duty to follow and imitate Him.

II. Point.

This spiritual circumcision must last during our whole lifetime.

Our Saviour's dolorous Sacrifice began eight days after His Birth, and it was finished only on Calvary, although a single drop of His Precious Blood had sufficed to save the world; but that which would have satisfied divine justice, did not satisfy His love. Besides He would have us know that this subdual of our natural inclinations necessitates their daily mortification, up to the close of our lives. On this day of pain to the Holy Child, let us strive to understand the importance, extent and duration of the immolation for which a soul offers itself, if it really aspires to perfection. It is a hard necessity perhaps; but the love of Jesus will soften it: each application of the knife of spiritual circumcision renders us more like our suffering Lord, and another degree of union is formed between Him and ourselves. We are indeed our own enemies if we seek to draw back from these painful but salutary operations, whereby the old man being destroyed in us, we may live unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

COLLOQUY.

Holy Child, Lover of souls, Who didst will to suffer in Thy innocent Flesh,—I offer Thee my health,—my strength,—my life;—and will use them in Thy service, by the exercise of continual mortification. Give me that spirit of mortification, which quickens the growth of virtues in the soul:—may the desire of pleasing Thee strengthen me in holiness,—deliver me from the bondage of sin,—and cause me to find my glory alone in loving Thee, and in suffering for love of Thee.

RESOLUTION.

I propose to make such and such particular sacrifices; thus to begin a life of truer mortification and self-renouncement.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Third of January.

Jesus attracts Mary to the contemplation of His Mysteries.

And His Mother kept all these things in her heart.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us look at Mary, near the Crib,—lovingly contemplating the Holy Child.

II. Prelude.

O Mary, permit us, beside thee, to contemplate Thy Divine Son : and do thou obtain for us, that we may have a part in the consolation, the feeling of reverential love and fervour thou didst experience during this holy exercise.

I. Point.

What was the object of Mary's contemplation ?

All her thoughts were concentrated on her much loved Child, as also all her affections, all her desires. It was for Him, in Him, and by Him she thought—she loved—she suffered—she rejoiced. In this adoration she wished all to participate who approached her Infant. This desire was not merely, in her, the effect of maternal tenderness, it was a sentiment of faith, of love towards God, and charity towards men. We learn that she meditated with extreme attention, on the message she had had from God ; on all the marvels of which she had been the witness ; on all the mysteries which had taken place before her eyes. All these particular circumstances she pondered over ; her heart was enkindled, and inflamed as she continued her enraptured contemplation. Do we occupy ourselves in this way ? Is Jesus the continual object of our desires—of our hopes—of our love ? is He the usual subject of our thoughts and reflections ? Is it to Him that we give account of all we see, and hear, and do ? Must we not own that we do not imitate the Virgin Mother as we ought ? O Jesus ! pardon this, our infidelity ; and grant that henceforth we may learn from Mary to occupy ourselves more, or rather only, with Thee.

II. Point.

What fruits did Mary gain by her sublime contemplation ?

These fruits were indeed precious, and abundant. She began to anticipate the happiness of the life of the elect in Heaven;—she was learning from Him, Who is the Truth itself;—she contemplated Him, Who was All-lovely;—felt the influence of the fire and light of His divine charity. This nearness to Jesus disengaged her more and more from sensible objects; her mind soared each moment, and with rapid flight, beyond the visible things of this world;—by her humble faith, and burning charity, she drew for herself a supply of living water from the fountain of the Sacred Heart; day by day she increased in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Finding herself at every hour within the Sanctuary of the Living God, she sought and found in her Adorable Son all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. O Heart of Mary, Ark of the Covenant, which contained all that was most precious in Heaven and earth, teach us how to meditate upon the words and actions of Thy Child; and may they be engraved so deeply in our hearts, that we lose none of them; but that they produce in us abundant fruits of grace and salvation.

Colloquy.

O Blessed Mary, it is true indeed to say that thou didst choose the better part. What joy for thee to contemplate, in profound recollection at the Feet of thy Dear Son, the marvellous events which accompanied His coming into the world. O my Mother, let me remain near thee, and contemplate the Holy Child.

Resolution.

Imitating Mary, I will bring the remembrance of the Infant Jesus often before my mind to-day.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

His Mother kept all these things in her heart.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! living in Mary.

Fourth of January.

Jesus attracts Saint Joseph by the virtues of His Infancy.

Thou hast presented Him with blessings of sweetness.—Ps. XX.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Saint Joseph, on his knees, at the Feet of the Infant Jesus; offering Him his homage of adoration and consecrating himself to His service.

II. PRELUDE.

O Holy Child, wilt Thou not communicate to us also the same sentiments as Thou didst to Thy Foster-Father, and draw us to the practice of Thy virtues?

I. POINT.

Jesus communicates to Saint Joseph the love of humility. What an honourable position was that to which Saint Joseph was elevated by the Incarnation. He was admitted to the knowledge of those ineffable secrets, which were hidden from the wise of this world.

The Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, called him

her Husband, and obeyed him: the Incarnate Word called him His Father, and obeyed him also. Who can imagine any station in life so great, so excellent? And yet, in the midst of the extraordinary favours conferred on him, he preserved a profound humility, and kept secret the high privileges with which God honoured him; he refrained from publishing abroad, the incomprehensible mysteries which he had seen accomplished: he did not curiously penetrate into them; leaving it to God to make them known, at the time fixed by His all-wise decrees. He thought only of corresponding to the designs of Providence; and acted in simple accordance with the commands given him by the Angel. Although of the royal race of the Kings of Judea, he was contented to remain in a condition which, to the eyes of the world, was poor and contemptible; his only ambition being to supply the wants of the Holy Family by the labour of his hands. We may not pass unnoticed the fact, that he might have found many motives to justify his leaving the obscurity of his humble rank. Chosen of God to fulfil the sublimest functions, receiving daily the respect and obedience of the Son of the Most High, and of His holy Mother, he might have questioned as to whether he should not quit his work-shop:—whether he ought to keep silence concerning all the wonders he had been privileged to see and hear. What sublime revelations he might have spoken of! The Heavenly Messenger had visited him more than once; he had witnessed the marvellous events which had surrounded the Birth of Jesus:—but humility kept him silent. When Thou, O Divine Saviour, dost draw souls to Thyself, it is by the special attractions of humility, silence and holy obscurity. *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Face: Thou shalt protect them in Thy Tabernacle.* Let us then not desire to be known and

sought after, nor put our confidence in creatures'; but learn to taste in silence and in prayer the happiness of our union with the Divine Spouse of our souls.

II. POINT.

Jesus instructs Saint Joseph in the practice of poverty and self-abnegation.

It was the sight of that state of indigence to which the Incarnate Word was reduced, which made Saint Joseph conceive a contempt for riches. For Jesus, in coming into the world, had not been content only to be born in poverty, in deprivation, in want; but, having laid aside His greatness, and His power, He began at once to practice that self-renunciation and abnegation, to which hereafter He would call those who would follow Him. Admirably indeed did Saint Joseph practise the lessons taught him in the school of the Heavenly Master! Let us consider all his conduct, after the Angel revealed to him the mysteries of salvation; how he submitted to the commands of Providence, abandoned himself into the Hands of God; forgetting himself and manifesting his spirit of faith. He came,—he went,—he kept silence,—he adored. He possessed nothing, he desired nothing, he regretted nothing; no occurrence disquieted him, he feared no danger. He lived only for Jesus and Mary, and his one thought was, how to provide for all their necessities. He was no longer his own, but devoted to the Holy Child and His saintly Mother. Give me the grace, O Jesus, to live by Thy divine Life, which Thou communicatest to souls dear to Thee.

COLLOQUY.

Chaste Spouse of the purest of Virgins, the Mother of

God; thou wast the faithful guardian of the most precious of all treasures; the depositary of the most august Mysteries. I rejoice in thy glory, I revere thy greatness. Thou wast found worthy to have the direction of the actions of the God-Man, to hold the place of Father to the Infant Jesus;—thy care, thy toil, thy daily work—all were at the disposal of the Sacred Humanity, for Its sustenance. Adopted by Him as His Foster-father, thou didst receive an abundance of grace and of spiritual gifts, proportioned to this glorious adoption. Deign then, O great Saint, to obtain for me the grace to imitate thy virtues, so that I may live and die like thee in the love of Jesus and Mary.

RESOLUTION.

To follow with fidelity the inspirations of grace.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Whosoever shall humble himself as this Little Child, he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Fifth of January.

Poverty of Jesus in the Manger.

Mary brought forth her First-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

We see before us a poor stable, into which the chill night

sought after, nor put our confidence in creatures'; but learn to taste in silence and in prayer the happiness of our union with the Divine Spouse of our souls.

II. POINT.

Jesus instructs Saint Joseph in the practice of poverty and self-abnegation.

It was the sight of that state of indigence to which the Incarnate Word was reduced, which made Saint Joseph conceive a contempt for riches. For Jesus, in coming into the world, had not been content only to be born in poverty, in deprivation, in want; but, having laid aside His greatness, and His power, He began at once to practice that self-renunciation and abnegation, to which hereafter He would call those who would follow Him. Admirably indeed did Saint Joseph practise the lessons taught him in the school of the Heavenly Master! Let us consider all his conduct, after the Angel revealed to him the mysteries of salvation; how he submitted to the commands of Providence, abandoned himself into the Hands of God; forgetting himself and manifesting his spirit of faith. He came,—he went,—he kept silence,—he adored. He possessed nothing, he desired nothing, he regretted nothing; no occurrence disquieted him, he feared no danger. He lived only for Jesus and Mary, and his one thought was, how to provide for [illegible] sities. He was no longer his own, but [illegible] Child and His saintly Mother. [illegible] to live by Thy divine Li[illegible] dear to Thee.

Chaste

God; thou wast the faithful guardian of the most precious of all treasures; the depositary of the most august Mysteries. I rejoice in thy glory, I revere thy greatness. Thou wast found worthy to have the direction of the actions of the God-Man, to hold the place of Father to the Infant Jesus;—thy care, thy toil, thy daily work—all were at the disposal of the Sacred Humanity, for Its sustenance. Adopted by Him as His Foster-father, thou didst receive an abundance of grace and of spiritual gifts, proportioned to this glorious adoption. Deign then, O great Saint, to obtain for me the grace to imitate thy virtues, so that I may live and die like thee in the love of Jesus and Mary.

RESOLUTION.

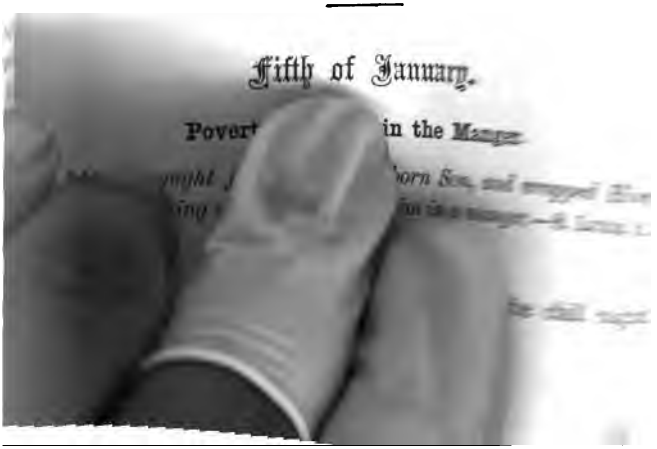
To follow with fidelity the inspirations of grace.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Whosoever shall humble himself as this Little Child, he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.



air enters; by the light of the moon one can distinguish at the far end of this stable, two animals; and there too is the first Cradle of the Son of God.

II. Prelude.

Give us grace, O Jesus, to comprehend how highly Thou dost love and esteem holy poverty; so that our affection for it may increase, and that we may practise it as perfectly as the vocation we have embraced demands of us.

I. Point.

Jesus cherished and practised poverty.

By the Word were all things made; consequently all things are His; yet out of love for poverty, He despoiled Himself of all, and was born in the most complete state of want;—without even those little necessaries which the poorest can provide. O Saviour, how does this—Thy poverty—condemn our love of ease; our many requirements. We, who are called upon to imitate Thee, content ourselves with the name of being poor for Thy Sake, without wishing to feel any of the inconveniences of poverty, or that anything should be wanting to us; we are even careful to provide against this; we murmur perhaps at the smallest privation imposed on us; our sensuality takes alarm if our preferences are not satisfied. How much pre-occupation and disquietude when we are in need of anything! And yet we pride ourselves on being the friends of the Holy Child in His poverty. May we not feel ashamed at the slight similarity existing between Jesus and ourselves? at our having so little of the spirit of the Gospel? At the foot of the Crib should we not drink in a love and esteem for holy poverty?

II. POINT.

Our riches should consist in possessing Jesus.

The Word in coming into the world, wishing to detach the hearts of men from the perishable goods of this life, was Himself totally destitute of them; He despised them. He had no need of bright gold and jewels, nor of rich garments to enhance His beauty.—His infinite perfections, they were His vestments;—His numberless merits, they were His riches;—and Heaven, together with eternal happiness, these were the goods He offered in exchange to all those who might follow His example of detachment. Jesus,—His Sacred Heart,—His merits,—His virtues,—these are the treasures of a religious person, who, having understood the teaching of the Good Master, has left all for love of Him, and cares for nought else. Perhaps, in consequence of this sacrifice, such a one may be deprived of many things profitable for the present life; but this is no matter; Jesus is the possession won by the sacrifice, and He can supply for all deficiencies. Have we to endure much, on account of spiritual poverty and difficulties? there are the riches of the merits of Jesus, to which we can confidently have recourse:—sheltered within the Sacred Heart, there can be found the graces of illumination and of strength, to assist the soul in the practice of all the virtues of a saintly life. What riches do we not possess in Jesus! greater far than all the goods of earth: happy are we if we do possess Him in our hearts,—but to do this, we must detach ourselves from all things of sense and despoil ourselves of self.

COLLOQUY.

What a cause of confusion to me, O Jesus, is the con-

sideration of Thy example and my conduct! What an immense difference between Thy sentiments and mine! Thou wast so far deprived of all, that none there were who thought even of pitying Thee: Thou didst endure in silence; and more than this, Thou hadst even chosen this poor and lowly condition. And I, who am Thy servant, am alarmed when the least privation presents itself; and would put it away. Forgive me, O my God, I will strive in future to make myself more conformable to Thy holy poverty, by bearing, as I ought, all the privations with which it may please Thee to prove me; only, give me Thy love; give me Thyself.—In Thee alone, O Jesus, is all my sufficiency.

RESOLUTION.

The riches which I find in the poverty of Jesus, shall form my treasure; I will unite to His sufferings the privations I may have occasion to bear.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Sixth of January.—The Epiphany.

The benefit of being called to the true Faith.

Wise Men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us look at the bright Star, shining in the East; and see the Magi, first-fruits of the Gentiles, starting forth to come and adore their God and Saviour.

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus, Who didst make Thyself known to our forefathers in the Christian Faith, manifest Thyself to us today:—augment our faith, so that comprehending the excellence of this gift, we may be true to it.

I. POINT.

Our vocation as members of the Catholic Church is an infinite good.

In calling these Wise Men to Bethlehem, Jesus conferred on us a signal benefit: through them as our representatives, He bestowed on us the gift of Faith, and together with this precious gift, all the riches of Heaven, comprehended in a true knowledge of God Himself. He had for so long a time been misunderstood by the Gentile world;—it had had no rightly conceived ideas of God,—so good,—so holy,—so powerful,—so merciful,—so perfect; a firm belief in Whom is, even here, the perfect happiness of those that acknowledge Him. By Faith we know and believe in Jesus Christ; the great Mysteries He has accomplished for the redemption of Man; the miracles He has performed; the Sacraments with which He has enriched His Church; and the doctrine which is Her light and Her rule. By Faith we know that man was created to God's own Image; and also our eternal destiny. By Faith we gain courage to overcome the perversity of nature, and to press forward towards per-

fection. What a favour, what a benefit is the gift of faith! How highly should we esteem it, and how unbounded should our gratitude for it be, towards Jesus its Author and Finisher. Let us bless God Who has given this divine light to direct and guide us on our way to Heaven; and pray that He may enlighten also with this sacred flame all infidels, unbelievers, and heretics, in whose hearts it is, alas! extinguished.

II. POINT.

Our life should be in accordance with our faith.

Let us consider what use we make of the gift of Faith. Knowing God, do we serve him with zeal and fidelity, by rendering ourselves worthy of being His children, paying Him our homage willingly and lovingly, and putting away the strange gods of vice, of passion, of self-love, of egotism. With our knowledge of Jesus and all He has done for us, are we sensible of His generosity, and thankful for His bounty? Are our hearts all His? Are we really studying to imitate Him? Are His maxims the rule of our judgment and of our actions? Have we adopted, as our own, His doctrine concerning humility, mortification, and poverty? Our conduct should not be in contradiction to our faith. We have here ample matter for self-examination, and perchance for self-reproach; but also motives for re-animating in ourselves the spirit—the life of Faith.

COLLOQUY.

O Jesus, Divine Life of the World! Who hast enlightened our hearts with the clear light of the one true Faith, I thank Thee for this signal favour. Renew in me this heavenly gift; grant that by its steady light I may tread in Thy Footprints, during this time of my exile, until it shall

be given me to possess Thee ever, in the realms of unfading brightness and beauty.

RESOLUTION.

I will constantly bear witness, by my gratitude towards Jesus, of my thankfulness for my vocation to the true Faith.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I believe, Lord, may I live by faith!

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Seventh of January.

Manifestation of Jesus to the Magi.

There came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying; where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us picture to ourselves the hilly and difficult roads, and the deserts by which the Magi travelled, and the length of their journey. Their enquiry troubles Herod, and all Jerusalem with him.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant us the grace, O Jesus, to copy in ourselves the generosity and constancy of the Magi; so that we, too, may receive the plenitude of Thy benedictions.

I. POINT.

Jesus calls the Gentiles.

Jesus had already drawn the Shepherds to His Crib; but this single call did not satisfy His most ardent desire, which was that all nations should receive the Faith. Therefore He created a miraculous Star; and while the attention of the Wise Men was thus arrested, He solicited by His grace all who wondered at the appearance of this Star, to come and visit Him.—Three only were faithful to this call of grace.—But then to make up for the general insensibility of the rest, these three kings proved the sincerity of their zeal, so far as to merit from Jesus, rare and precious favours. And such is still the bounty and liberality of Jesus towards those who make efforts to act in accordance with His inspirations. He pours on them that plentiful supply of grace, which those who are cowardly and indifferent disdain. The Star represents the means, God makes use of, to draw us into His service. How appropriately chosen was the Star for the Magi, whose occupation it was to study the science of astronomy:—we may be sure that God's grace is proportioned to each of us, according to our character and intelligence; and that He takes into account our disposition, our needs, our employments, and the way in which we may best act for our own good and that of others. This Star in the East had not a fixed and regular motion in the firmament, as others have; its course depended on the direction expressly given it, for the guidance of the Wise Men:—and grace too, along its whole course, depends on the directing power of the Will of God, expressly manifested. The Star disappeared for a time,—grace is not always perceived;—sometimes its light is hidden, to punish our infidelities; sometimes to prove the constancy of our love. God tries souls according to the degree of

perfection for which they are destined. The reason of these trials is that the knowledge of God and those spiritual delights which flow from the Divine Source cannot dwell in, nor even enter a soul, before the mind, heart, and senses are disengaged from, at least, greater imperfections. Affliction and mortification purify them from that which is material; and render them more susceptible to the impressions of grace. God knows it is needful for us to pass through trials, such as temptations, desolation, obscurity:—causes of discouragement and similar difficulties arise, to dispose our souls for union with God here,—just as the holy Souls pass through Purgatory to arrive at eternal union with Him in Heaven. In times of such suffering the solid virtues—firmness—and perfection are acquired: *for power is made perfect in infirmity*, as Saint Paul says: and virtues are better cultivated, when crosses exercise our patience. At length the Star leads the Magi to the Feet of the Infant King, and the luminary of grace leads us there also.

II. POINT.

Jesus calls the Jews.

Jesus, Who came from Heaven to bring happiness to all mankind, called the Jews first to the Cave in Bethlehem,—then the Gentiles;—desiring to reunite them as one people. But the Jews were ungrateful; their pride and worldly business robbed their intelligence of the meaning of the Scriptures deposited in their hands; and made them to have misconceptions concerning the Redeemer promised to Israel. What did Jesus do? He sent them the Magi to awaken their attention by their questionings. He would, with that tenderness of feeling, which has its home in the Sacred Heart, spare them the vexation and shame of receiving a

hard lesson or direct reproof: it was to find out for themselves the Birthplace of the King of kings that the Magi spoke of Him. The Volume they professed to study could utter this timely reproach to the high priests: "*The time of waiting is accomplished and you think not of this*". And the love—the wisdom—the mercy—the condescension of the Sacred Heart are repaid with ingratitude, indifference, and even treason. The doctors of the Law point out the place where the Messias is to be born, but do not deign to take one step to go and see Him. O Good Jesus! we are also Thy privileged children, who have a fuller knowledge of Thy Mysteries; are we as faithful as we should be, considering our advantages? Do we not often fail in the duties of our religious state, through indifference or indolence? Bending in spirit at Thy Feet, it is for us to ask pardon for our past negligences, and that Thou wilt give us grace to be more faithful in future, in the fulfilling of our particular obligations.

Colloquy.

Divine Jesus, full of goodness, Who wouldst save all men, deign to give me the grace to serve Thee with fidelity: and since Thou dost expect great generosity of soul, in those whom Thou hast prevented by Thy special favours, grant that I may never lose courage; but triumph over every obstacle. O Mary, my Mother; be thou my guiding Star, to lead me to Jesus.

Resolution.

To seek Jesus, by the practice of that virtue for which He has given us the strongest attraction.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

O Jesus, draw me; we will run after Thee, to the odour of Thy ointment.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Eighth of January.

The excellence of the religious vocation.

There came Wise Men to Jerusalem.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us bring before our minds the Magi, at the Feet of the Infant Jesus; offering to Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Spouse, Who has chosen us in preference to so many others, make us to understand the excellence of our vocation, and give us grace faithfully to fulfil its duties.

I. POINT.

Jesus, lying in the manger, lays the foundation of the religious life.

If we consider the choice our Saviour made of the Magi, for whom He caused the appearance of the Star,—the fewness of their number,—their docility,—the generosity of their undertaking,—the presents they offered to Him,

we shall see in all this, a picture of the religious life. The Stable was the first Sanctuary where Jesus made profession to lead a life of poverty, chastity and obedience; and from thence He sends again and again, a Star, to attract to Himself a small number of privileged souls, whom He has chosen, like the faithful Magi: they leave their country and their families, put aside all obstacles, surmount all difficulties, and bring gifts to offer to the Heavenly King: fine gold—in renouncing all the goods of this life by the vow of poverty: myrrh—in consecrating to Him their persons, by the vow of chastity: and frankincense—in sacrificing to Him their judgment and their will by the vow of obedience. Such is the sanctity and sublimity of the religious vocation. The Divine Will is our rule; God is our heritage; the purity of the Angels is our clothing; and the zeal of Jesus, to glorify His Father and gain souls, we make our own. Do we rightly appreciate the excellence of our holy vocation? O Saviour, may we be worthy of the choice Thou hast made of us; and of all the graces this vocation brings with it.

II. Point.

Our life must be conformable to our vocation.

The Magi had the happiness of enjoying the Presence of the Holy Child, for Whom they had sought with so much perseverance: but they found Him in a condition of poverty, suffering and lowliness. Religious must not only enjoy the privilege of being the favourites of Jesus, and of often tasting the delights of His Presence, but they will also have to partake in His lowliness, sufferings, and privations. What are our feelings at the sight of the trials and sacrifices which our vocation imposes upon us? Are we really poor, —humble,—obedient? Do we cherish as our most precious

ornament the angelic virtue? and for its preservation, joyfully make the required sacrifices. Do we find that we are glad to be able to pay to the Sovereign Master, the tribute of homage and adoration refused Him by so many of His creatures? The consideration of the sublimity of our vocation should revive within us the love of the pious practices it demands.

Colloquy.

Divine Spouse of my soul, to Whom I have consecrated unreservedly my will—my possessions—my heart—my whole being,—I renew to-day the gifts that I have made Thee; and ask pardon for the infidelities of which I have been guilty, since I promised to be entirely Thine. In future, I resolve to be so; and I will place my happiness in offering myself to Thee continually as a chosen victim, sacrificed for love of Thee.

Resolution.

To witness before God, my gratitude for the vocation He has given me; and to fulfil my holy engagement with fresh vigour.

Thought for the Day.

What shall I render to the Lord for all the things He hath rendered to me? I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise.

Prayer.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Ninth of January.

Further considerations on the Journey of the Magi.

There came Wise Men from the East.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the Magi, rejoicing that their perilous journey is at an end.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Jesus, Who by the allurements of Thy grace dost draw souls to the love and practice of virtue, make us to know and follow Thy Divine attractions, so that we may please Thee, and make progress in perfection.

I. POINT.

Jesus draws souls to Himself by various means of attraction.

Let us consider this variety. In the call of the Magi, we see the benignity of Jesus. The contemplation of the stars being their ordinary study, He made use of this fact; He caused to shine a new Star; it was therefore unknown to them, and they were the more convinced that it had some hidden signification: by its shining, they were to gain the knowledge of a Mystery that should save the world; and in following its light, they became more and more desirous to find Jesus. Thus does He act towards those in whom He would establish His reign. He condescends, so to speak, to take into consideration their weakness, and their peculiarities; thus awakening a more perfect love for

Himself in hearts which before have often been farthest from Him: *Where sin abounded, grace does more abound.* He bends down, in profound humility, a soul that may have been most proud and worldly: He causes the most thoughtless and trifling, to become possessed of great spirituality; and calls to a perfect obedience, the most independent and the most wayward:—for He, in His wisdom, gives to each, according to His purposes, that peculiar attraction which will lead him most surely to the height of perfection to which he is called. How happy are those souls that are attentive to this interior voice;—how quickly do they proceed along their Heaven-directed course:—divine grace animates them with holy fervour, and makes them count as nothing, troubles and sacrifices. Do we follow our Star? To the practice of what virtue do we particularly apply ourselves? Are we negligent enough not to strive after any? If it were so, how guilty would our indifference make us. Let us examine ourselves seriously on this point.

II. Point.

It is most important that we should follow the special attraction offered us.

When we remember, that it was to their fidelity in following the leading of that particular Star, that the Magi owed their salvation, we become impressed by the importance of watching, to see what God intends us to do; and listening at the same time, for that interior voice, by which the Divine Master gives us to understand how we may best render ourselves agreeable to Him. We should follow in the path He points out to us, with joy and eagerness. Do not let us fear lest the allurements of grace should gain a strong hold on us; but rather rejoice if it may but be so;—it will only

suppress within us, that which really torments us; and impose such sacrifices as will enrich us with merits and sanctity. Let us find in the pious Magi, examples for ourselves; they saw the Star; this was enough; they leave all to follow it. Are we not grieved to think that, after so many years spent in our Master's service, we have advanced so little? We have been attracted by the charms of His love, and He has often pressed us to make some special sacrifice for His sake; but it has been the sacrifice of our dominant passion, and we have not had the courage to attend to the voice of His counsels.—Let us even now rise and follow that Star, which is shining to lead us nearer to Jesus.

Colloquy.

Earliest Apostles of Jesus Christ, whom He called to be the glorious first-fruits of the Gentiles, ask for me, of our Saviour, that my heart may be docile to the inspirations of grace; and that like you, I may watch for the shining of the Star which is to guide me; and may faithfully walk along the path it defines for me, by its light. O Jesus, Whose attractions charm Thy true lovers, may my heart be united to Thee, by an inviolable attachment; so that nothing may have power to separate me from Thee.

Resolution.

To begin from to-day to practise, more perseveringly, the particular virtue to which Jesus attracts me.

Thought for the Day.

Draw me, O sweet Jesus.

Prayer.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Tenth of January.

Obedience of the Magi to the call of Jesus.

The Star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the Young Child was:—and entering the house, they found the Child with Mary, His Mother, and falling down they adored Him.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves, the Magi after a long and difficult journey, arriving at length in Bethlehem, and entering the stable.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Child! from the obedient docility of the Magi, we learn with what ardour we ought to respond to Thy invitations of grace. Revive this fervour within our souls.

I. POINT.

The obedience of the Magi was prompt, courageous, and persevering.

Let us enter, as far as possible, into the secret intercourse of Jesus with the three Kings. He had called them from afar; they had heard His voice; they had started forth without hesitation, and without taking any heed to the plausible reasons there might have been for delay. *We have seen His Star*, they said, *and we have come to adore Him.* Their first generous act had opened the channel of celestial favours. Many obstacles had suggested themselves,—they had had great difficulties to overcome, about the road, and the length of their journey; nothing had been known for

certain before they set out upon it.—But each act of fidelity to grace augments it.—The Star which they had followed had abandoned them, but their perseverance, nevertheless, in seeking Jesus, merited its re-appearance. So step by step they had come by the light of grace. We see them, at length, at the Feet of the King of kings; *and falling down they adore Him.* As we kneel beside them, let us ask ourselves if Jesus has cause to be as contented with us as He was with them: does He speak to our hearts, as He did to theirs? silently expressing the love He feels towards those who are responsive to His call? Do we imitate the simplicity of the Wise Men? making it our glory to recognise, with child-like faith, our God in the Infant Jesus.

II. POINT.

We must exert all our carefulness, so as to correspond to the graces Jesus offers us.

If Jesus granted the Magi extraordinary favours, to bring them near to Himself, and that they should own Him as their King, what numberless means has He not also employed, to establish perfectly His reign in us? Gentle inspirations,—holy attractions,—pressing solicitations,—interior reproaches:—nothing on His part has been wanting to draw us to Himself, and to free us from the domination of our corrupt nature, which so powerfully inclines us to evil.—Until our Heavenly King has made Himself Master over the enemies He finds in us; and the difficulties we ourselves raise, have been put down, He excites us to spiritual combat; but His aim is to ensure to us hereafter, peace, and tranquillity, and joy in the consciousness of His approval.—The difficulties of the way to Jesus, may cost us much;—they may arise from exterior or interior causes; but the obstacles are not insurmountable, and our consolation

is unspeakable, when we shall find ourselves at His Feet. O Saviour, reign Thou over us; we, like the Magi, give of the best we have to offer; accept this tribute of our gratitude and love.

COLLOQUY.

Sacred Heart of Jesus! how overflowing are the well-springs of Thy grace; what dost Thou not do to gain my heart, that Thou mayest reign therein with Thy gentle power. Be Thou therefore blessed, praised and adored.—Deign to forgive me for all the ill-use I have made of Thy benefits. Make me ever to follow the Star of Thy grace; may it be the guide of my thoughts, my judgment, my actions—of my whole conduct.

RESOLUTION.

To be very attentive to follow the spiritual attractions of grace; letting myself be guided by them, without listening to nature's enticements.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Eleventh of January.

The Infant Jesus is the Pattern of the Elect.

Whosoever shall receive one such little child in My Name, receiveth me.—S. MARK IX.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Mary, taking care of the

Holy Child ; carrying Him in her arms and pressing Him to her heart.

II. Prelude.

We adore Thee, O Eternal Wisdom, because Thou didst become an Infant for our sake—that Thou mightest draw near to us.—Make us childlike also. When we are beside Thy Cradle, earthly wisdom is silenced, and pride disappears :—who could wish to uphold what Thou didst come to destroy ?

I. Point.

The Child Jesus is the Model of the elect.

And Jesus said : *Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven : because the kingdom of Heaven is for such.* When we see the Word-Incarnate subjecting Himself to months of silence, how are the reasonings of human prudence hushed ? our desire should be to become little also ; —to be silent, and pass for a child in spiritual matters. Self-love prefers even to suggest a readiness to die with our Lord, rather than that we should share the dependence and helplessness of His Infancy : for littleness seems less bearable than death. But Jesus, Thou art our Wisdom and our Glory ; and, like a child, we should only think we are worthy of being commended, when we are amenable and submissive. We here learn that we ought to allow ourselves to be guided, without resistance, self-will, or self-opinionatedness, by those who have the right to direct us. And when we speak, O Holy Child, let us again imitate Thy simplicity. It is thus that we should strive to become, in all things, like Thee. Thou didst willingly give Thyself into the keeping of Thy holy Mother.—By her Thou wast lifted from Thy

Crib,—moved hither and thither,—wrapped in Thy swaddling clothes,—put to sleep, watched over by her, both day and night, without manifesting any waywardness or impatience. We do well to dwell on all this part of our Lord's Childhood—and to take Him for our Model both for simplicity and wisdom.

II. POINT.

The Saviour became a Child to sanctify childhood.

The Son of God, having taken our nature, without ceasing to be All-powerful, submitted Himself to the various needs of infancy, in order to sanctify it. We see Mary rendering Him all those loving services of which His Babyhood stood in need. Who will give us to share in her happiness? Jesus Himself will do so, for He says: *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in My Name receiveth Me. As you did it to one of these, the least of My brethren, ye did it to Me.* Then, O Mary, we may not envy thee; we too, associates with thee in thy blessed materity, can watch over, and take care of thy Little Infant; for with hearts full of tenderness for children we may find opportunities of serving Jesus in them. What a happiness is it that we can pray for, and often, perhaps, assist by our care and counsel, the little ones, whose simplicity and candour our Saviour bids us imitate. Let us turn to Mary and observe with what reverent love she tends her Child; and how He, in return, lavishes upon her His caresses. Let us ask Him to stretch forth His little Hands to bless us, and touch our hearts; so that their affections may be calmed, by a holy influence, into a compliance with His desire that we should become like little children, in humility, confidence, and simplicity.

COLLOQUY.

Like the Holy Child Jesus, may I be humble, simple, and little: little in my own estimation, and may I wish sincerely to be so in the estimation of others. Have I not hitherto shrunk from thus appearing childlike? Has this not been, because I am not so in reality? I lament over the pride which renders me so unlike Jesus, in His holy Mother's keeping. Henceforth then, may it be my aim to copy Him; and to receive His grace, His teaching, and His authority over me, with the sentiments of a little child.

RESOLUTION.

To quicken my devotion for the Sacred Childhood of Jesus.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Twelfth of January.

The Simplicity of Jesus in His Childhood.

Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Jesus in His Mother's arms.

Who is this Child? It is the Son of God,—the Eternal Wisdom; concealing beneath His Infancy, the greatness of His majesty and the infinity of His perfections.

II. Prelude.

Divine Saviour, give me to understand, by Thy example, how much simplicity honours and glorifies Thy Father; and give me grace to see the beauty of this virtue—so little appreciated—so little known.

I. Point.

Jesus willed to become a Child that He might be the Model of spiritual infancy, that is to say, simplicity;—of this, infancy is the symbol. The Divine Child in the Arms of His Parents, permitting that He should be carried, and placed where they would, is a perfect Pattern of evangelical simplicity, so highly recommended by the Divine Master in after years to His Apostles, in the words: *Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Let us try to comprehend better what this means. Religious persons, who possess this evangelical simplicity, practise entire abnegation of their judgment, of their will, and of their own interests, placing themselves at the disposal of their superiors;—they are ready to accept employments—or leave them;—to receive warnings, when in the wrong—or congratulations about any success; without a thought either of self-pity or of self-esteem. The Will of God, manifested by those in authority, and by their holy Rules—this is their life, their joy, their delight. They conform themselves to it, in all simplicity.—Our Divine Saviour takes pleasure in simple, upright hearts; and leaves those to take their own way, who pride themselves on their intellect, and exalt themselves; and who, being over-wise, are too apt

to reason about the commands of those who should direct them. We therefore cannot too highly esteem this simplicity, so dear to Him; but strive to become humble, and really little in our own eyes.

II. Point.

How the Infant Jesus practised simplicity.

Our Divine Saviour teaches us how we should be straightforward, and not only in our exterior conduct, but likewise in our intentions. He, from His Infancy, had but one motive to animate Him,—one intention to direct Him,—one end in view:—the love of God,—His glory, and the accomplishment of His holy Will. Such was the admirable simplicity of Jesus in all He did,—this is what ours should be, if we desire to fulfil the purpose of our calling, which is the glorifying of God and the sanctifying of souls.—It is most important then, in all we say and do, to have simple motives, and purity of intention. We ought to look straight up to God, and act in a spirit of true devotion toward Him, and abnegation of ourselves, *not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but doing the Will of God from the heart.* This divine simplicity!—what power it has over the Heart of God. Alas! we are far from possessing it. Like the children of the world, we often allow ourselves to be guided by motives of vanity and of self-interest;—seeking not God's glory but our own. And yet, ought we not, in our holy estate especially, to see God alone? to tend only toward God? and to act simply to please Him?

Colloquy.

O Infant Jesus, how All-lovely Thou art! the thought of Thy Childhood, with its innocence—its simplicity—its

candour, rejoices my heart;—grant that, treading under foot the duplicity of all mere human reasoning, I may become simple, little, and child-like, even as Thou wast.

RESOLUTION.

To abandon myself, like the Child Jesus, to the guidance of my superiors, that they may do with me what they will.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come to Me; for the kingdom of Heaven is for such.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Thirteenth of January.

The Dependence of the Child Jesus.

And Jesus was subject to Joseph and to Mary.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

We may picture to our minds the Holy Child Jesus, like all other children, powerless to speak, or to act; and entirely subject to Mary and to Joseph.

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus, because Thou wouldst destroy in us that false liberty which enslaves, Thou didst subject Thyself to a state

of absolute dependence on Thy creatures; give to us, both a love and esteem for that spirit of subordination, which ensures the perfection of a Religious.

I. POINT.

The Holy Child depends completely on Mary and Joseph.

The Sovereign Master of all things—the Author of life, —the God Whose Will is supreme—and on Whom all depends, becomes Himself dependent on His Mother and Saint Joseph. He, Who is the Centre of all action, would learn from others how to speak, to walk, to act. We may well wonder at this excessive condescension on the part of Our Lord: He would lead us thereby to see, how contrary to His desire is it, that we should follow our natural inclination to be independent, and to love liberty. And yet, this dangerous disposition exists in almost every one; it would even appear to glide in, and make its presence known amongst those who are under the necessity of living in a state of dependence on others. Are there not some who have a difficulty in obeying superiors?—who murmur before submitting?—and who wish to be masters of their own actions and proceedings? Are we ourselves amongst those who seek to avoid the little constraints to which our rules subject us? if, for example, we are not careful to observe silence, if we cannot accustom ourselves to the tiresomeness of subjection, do we not deprive ourselves of, at least, some of the highest spiritual advantages of the Religious Life?

II. POINT.

True liberty and happiness, in the Religious Life, consists in relying absolutely on superiors and on the holy Rule.

Religious persons, who to follow more closely in the

Footsteps of our Divine Lord, and to place themselves under the yoke of a perfect dependence on others, by breaking away from the bondage of their own will, free themselves indeed from a condition of servitude, and enter into one of true liberty. Making it their sole desire to please God, by doir His Will, and that of His representatives, they are alway contented :—employment, place, diet, health, sickness ;—whatever the circumstances may be, they can easily adapt themselves to them ; everywhere they are in peace, nothing interferes with the tranquillity they enjoy.—But those who are wayward, subject to their own caprices, to all the demands of unsubdued nature, are in sad thraldom : they are often troubled and disheartened : they are caught in their own net, and cannot free themselves. We should be convinced therefore that we shall find true peace, true liberty, and true happiness only in the complete abandonment of ourselves to God's guidance, made evident to religious persons in the direction of their superiors.

Colloquy.

Good Master, may the lesson of Thy subordination to Thy holy Parents, which I have just meditated upon, be useful to me. I fall at Thy Feet in deepest humility, on seeing how far I am from resembling Thee. Vanquished by Thy example, let me offer to Thee my whole being ;—my hands,—my feet,—my tongue,—my senses,—all the faculties I possess : so that my every movement may be regulated by the impulses of the Holy Spirit. Do with me what Thou wilt ; only let me gain somewhat of that spirit of reliance on others, of which Thy Childhood gives me so touching an example.

Resolution.

To act simply according to the rules laid down for me, who am consecrated to Thy service, O Jesus.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

My meat is to do the Will of Him Who sent Me.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Fourteenth of January.

The Holy Name of Jesus.

His Name was called JESUS.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves how every knee, of those that are in Heaven and in earth and under the earth, bows in the Name of Jesus.

II. PRELUDE.

O, my Saviour, make me to know the power of Thy Name, and grant me grace always to invoke It with love and confidence.

I. POINT.

The holy Name of Jesus is all-powerful.

It was in His Circumcision that the Incarnate Word, by receiving this Name, began to fulfil Its obligations, for it was at that moment He declared Himself as the Saviour of those who were lost; and proclaimed by the shedding of His Blood, that He was beginning His work of saving sinners. On the Cross, at the hour of His Death, He will again bear

the Title of Jesus, written over His Sacred Head; for on its blood-stained wood He finishes the work of man's redemption. This is that glorious Name which the Apostles are "to carry before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel". It is by It that they will be victorious over the world and Satan; and will perform miracles, so frequent and so manifest, that nothing shall withstand them. It is by the Name of Jesus that the Church is to pray, to defend herself, to increase, and to be upheld even to the end of time; by it, in all ages, the Saints—the Disciples of Jesus Christ, are to triumph over the evil passions, temptations, and suggestions of corrupt nature, and to attain to all the perfections of Christian virtue. O divine power of the Name of Jesus!—I adore thee, and desire henceforth to seek in thee my strength and consolation.

II. Point.

The holy Name of Jesus should inspire us with great confidence.

With what fervent trust should we invoke the holy Name, since it is our strength and our light. Saint Bernard says: "When the salutary Name of Jesus presents Itself to my mind, and enlightens my soul with Its rays, then my passions are calmed, and my temptations disappear; in pronouncing this sweet Name, I see before me a Man, who is meek and humble of heart, affable, sedate, chaste, merciful, adorned with every virtue; and at the same time I remember that this Man is God Almighty, who gives me, on the one hand, the example of His Life, so that I may strive to copy it; and on the other, His grace and His help, by which to act. In a word, it seems to me that every kind of good superabounds in my heart, when the Name of Jesus sounds in

my ears." Would that we might never cease to invoke It, to celebrate It, to bless It, and to beseech our Lord to bring about in us, that which His holy Name signifies; saying to Him, with Saint Augustine, "O Jesus, be to us our Jesus,"—that is to say, deliver us from our sins,—sanctify us,—save us.

Colloquy.

Engrave in my heart Thy adorable Name, O my Saviour; may It be to me my strength, my support, my hope; may It defend me in temptation, and protect me in all danger; in the sorrows and trials of this life, may it sustain and comfort me; may I ever pronounce It with reverence, love, and confidence; may It unceasingly recal to my mind Him by Whom I have been saved, to Whom I am consecrated, for Whom I ought to live, and Whom I hope to possess eternally. May I bear It in my soul here below, as a token both of sanctity and of combat; so that amongst the elect in Paradise, I may bear It on my forehead, as a sign of triumph and of glory.

Resolution.

To adore often, during this day, the holy Name of Jesus.

Thought for the Day.

Blessed be the Name of the Lord, from henceforth, now and for ever.

Prayer.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Fifteenth of January.

The effects of the Name of Jesus.

Put Me as a Seal upon thy heart.—CANT. VIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the Angel Gabriel, saying to Mary: *Thou shalt call His name JESUS.*

II. PRELUDE.

Grant us the grace, O Saviour, to have ever this Name engraved on our minds, so that all our thoughts may tend towards the salvation of our souls, they being sanctified by It.

I. POINT.

We ought to engrave deeply in our minds, the holy Name of Jesus.

To discover the deep signification of this Name, we must make It the frequent subject of our reflections: it is in meditation that we shall be enlightened by Its inherent power of illuminating. Of all the names belonging to the Incarnate Word, expressive of His mercy, or His greatness, that of Jesus manifests most perfectly all His divine attributes,—all His virtues,—all His benefits,—and, in consequence, conveys to us the most exalted, and at the same time, the most lovely and most excellent ideas concerning the Son of God. We may judge then, how holy and beneficial is the thought of the Name—Jesus, since It suffices to bring our Lord before our minds as our Saviour,—to make

us admire and love Him as our Redeemer.—Again, It sanctifies our memory,—effaces from it the remembrance of evil,—and suggests instead the recollection of holy examples,—of the joys of the blessed, and of the Mysteries of our Lord's Birth, Life and Death. It awakens, by turns, in our minds, joy—fear—confidence and love. If then the powers of our intellect are stamped with the impress of the Name—Jesus, we shall have holy thoughts, and pure and upright intentions. It will aid us powerfully in maintaining a constant union with our Heavenly Spouse.

II. Point.

The name of Jesus will produce in us salutary effects, only so far as we are actuated by the Spirit of our Lord.

In receiving this Name, Jesus devoted Himself once and for ever to the suffering He would undergo for our salvation. If we would feel within ourselves Its beneficial effects, we must strive earnestly to become like to Him Who bore It: acting in the same spirit of sacrifice and devotedness. Let us endeavour always, and with all our strength, to do—not the things which are the most easy, but those which are the most difficult;—not those which are the most agreeable to nature,—not those which tend to exalt us,—but those which are conducive to humility. Rather than foster the desire of possessing anything, let us prefer to be poor; for the Sake of Jesus Christ. Dedicated by our sublime vocation to the work of procuring unceasingly the greater glory of our Heavenly Spouse, our life should be a perpetual immolation of our senses, interior and exterior: it is only on this condition that we can hope to merit His commendation. O Name of Jesus—all-powerful—all-holy! to thee we must have recourse for the obtaining of a better love of

sacrifice:—may thy holy signification be verified by us,—in Thee may we find salvation. *There is no other name, under Heaven, given to men whereby we must be saved.*

COLLOQUY.

I will consider the holy Name of Jesus as a bright and shining Star, which will lead me by its clear light. May It enlighten me, direct me in all my doings; dispel the darkness which may gather round me, protect me from all illusion:—be constantly present to my mind, and sanctify all my thoughts.

RESOLUTION.

To renew my devotion for the Holy Name, by having It in my mind, and on my lips, often during this day.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

O Jesus, be Thou my Jesus, and save me.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Sixteenth of January.

Further effects of the Name of Jesus.

Put Me as a Seal upon thy heart.—CANT. VIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us imagine to ourselves how Mary must have guarded

within her heart this Sacred Name, after the visit of the Angel Gabriel.

II. PRELUDE.

O adorable Name of Jesus, be Thou engraved in our hearts, and sanctify our affections.

I. POINT.

The sacred Name of Jesus should be in our hearts, to excite therein holy affections.

If It be imprinted in our hearts, It will enkindle flames of love. Nothing is more powerful to produce in us every kind of holy desire—nothing is more capable of making us ready to glorify all the perfections of the Son of God,—to thank Him for all His benefits,—to imitate His virtues,—to shun all that could offend Him,—and lovingly to do all that could please Him. "When Jesus is present," says the author of the *Imitation*, "all goes well and nothing seems difficult: but when Jesus is absent everything is hard: when Jesus speaks not within, our comfort is not worth anything." O Heaven-sent Name! may we find a delight in loving It; may It be placed as a seal on all our affections, and in It may they all centre; so that they, being stedfastly turned towards Him, Whose Name we thus revere, may never be wasted on creatures nor on ourselves.

II. POINT.

The consolation a religious person finds in this Name.

It is especially to a spiritual person, who desires to be all for Jesus, that these words are addressed: *Put me as a Seal upon thy heart.* If that precious mark, that signature of the Name—Jesus, be engraved in our hearts, may we not count it as our highest glory and our greatest happiness?

Will it not be a source of untold joy? The Name of Jesus is sweeter than milk and honey. It carries with It peace,—and happiness,—and hope,—and all manner of good; It banishes all fear, It charms away all sadness, It softens into consolation the hardest trials, It changes bitterness into sweetness. After the Apostles had been scourged in Jerusalem, we read that *they rejoiced at being accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.* Let us ask ourselves if we could rejoice likewise, if called upon to suffer, for His Name's sake, contempt, scorn, and ill-treatment. Is that Name really written deeply in our hearts? We hope so: but why then are we so far from always being patient, submissive, and resigned under trials and afflictions? Why are we so wanting in confidence and self-abandonment?

Colloquy.

O my Loving Saviour, change Thou my heart by impressing on it more deeply, in characters of love, Thy Holy Name; that it may be the token of Thy being there, in possession of that which Thou hast conquered. Make me more entirely Thine;—may all my affections tend towards Thee, Whose Name I bear. Saved by Thee, redeemed by Thy precious Blood, and marked with Thy Holy Name, I will not fear that aught can separate me from my dear Lord.

Resolution.

To pray often to Jesus to imprint, more deeply, His Name in my heart.

Thought for the Day.

Put me as a Seal upon thy heart.

Prayer.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Seventeenth of January.

Further effects of the Holy Name of Jesus.

Put Me as a Seal upon thy heart.—CANT. VIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us again represent to ourselves how every knee in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, bows in the name of Jesus.

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour, grant that we may invoke with faith Thy holy Name; and that the virtue of It may sanctify all our actions.

I. POINT.

It is in this Name that we must do all we have to do.

If the Name of Jesus is really deeply engraved in our hearts and minds, the divine effects of It will be undoubtedly manifested in our words,—in our deeds,—in our whole conduct:—it is *out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh;* and as for our actions, they are, at once, the proof and the produce of either the love of God, or the love of self. Saint Francis de Sales says: "that one who would advance in perfection, and make progress in spirituality must, in the first place, turn all his thoughts and affections towards Jesus Christ; and then act in conformity with His Life on earth; this he should constantly study, that he may the better imitate it". And Saint Paul writes: *all, whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* The first Christians

were so faithful to this precept of the Apostles, that they sanctified all they did, by literally obeying it; the Holy Name at all times consecrated their work,—their rest,—their meals,—their visits,—and their prayers:—their most important and their least important occupations. When quitting their homes, or entering them, when meeting their friends, or leaving them, they pronounced It,—by It they were recognised;—It was their symbol of mutual charity; the tie which united all hearts. And surely we ought, as the members of the early Church did, to repeat often the Name of Jesus; to let It find Its place in our letters,—our conversations,—our daily intercourse. It should be the bond of union between us.—Let us invite Jesus to stay with us, by the use of His sacred Name; making it our delight to pronounce It, and in It to love one another.

II. POINT.

The invocation of the Name of Jesus, renders our actions agreeable to God.

When we act in this Name, our works become, in some sort, His; and therefore we have a share in His infinite merits. Happy are they who place under Its invocation the directing of all their business, their plans, their hopes, and their fears. Is it in this Name that we act, speak and think?—or is it not but too true that we sadly forget to invoke It? While we ask pardon for this omission, let us make amends by placing ourselves more under Its holy influence. When we wake, Jesus shall be before our eyes;—when we take our rest, Jesus shall occupy our last thoughts;—when we walk, it shall be in the company of Jesus;—when we are seated, Jesus shall be beside us;—when we study, Jesus shall be our Master;—when we write, Jesus

shall guide our hand;—when we pray, Jesus shall form, and animate our prayers;—when we are weary, Jesus shall be our repose;—when we are hungry, Jesus shall nourish us;—when we are sick, Jesus shall be our Physician;—when we die we will die in Jesus, Who is our life;—Jesus shall seal our lips in dying; Jesus shall close our eyes; Jesus shall be our last thought.

Colloquy.

O Holy Name of Jesus! on Thee depends the happiness of my life-time, and of my death-hour, and of all that concerns me;—Thou art my salvation. By invoking Thee with confidence, I desire to sanctify all my actions now; and in pronouncing It with trustfulness, and love, I would pass out of this world. Through all eternity would I repeat It.—Jesus, my life,—my love,—my happiness,—my All:—be Thou praised, loved and adored for ever and ever.

Resolution.

To be faithful to the pious practice of saying often: "Praised be Jesus Christ".

Thought for the Day.

All things do ye in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer.

Soul of Christ.

Eighteenth of January.

Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

After the days of Mary's Purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished; They carried Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord: as it is written in the Law.

I. Prelude.

Let us picture to our minds the road which led from Bethlehem to Jerusalem;—then the Temple,—and the Altar.

II. Prelude.

Deign, O Jesus, to communicate to us that generosity which filled Thy Heart, and that of Mary, in this Mystery.

I. Point.

The sacrifice Jesus makes of Himself.

If our Adorable Saviour, from the first moment of His Incarnation, offered Himself as a holocaust, by which He should glorify God the Father, and save our souls, with what joy must He have presented Himself, by the hands of Mary, to renew His Sacrifice with legal solemnity before the Divine Majesty of God, in His own Temple. He says to His Father, in thus obeying His law: *Behold, I come: sacrifices, and oblations, and holocausts for sin Thou wouldst not, neither are they pleasing to Thee: I come to do Thy Will.* By this consecration of His Being, He devoted Himself to suffering, humiliation, and death;—His offering was perfect; in it there was nothing excepted,—nothing

reserved: His Life was to be a perpetual sacrifice, and from the very beginning of it, He willingly accepted, for love of us, His Passion and His Cross, as the Victim of propitiation in our stead. How good, how generous is our Saviour; how widely different is our little sacrifice of ourselves from His! He had resolved to suffer for us, and nothing could stay Him from His purpose.—What has become of our spirit of self-sacrifice, when we find the service of God too hard?—when we would do only what is pleasing to nature? —when we are neglectful of lesser duties, through indifference or contempt? And of higher ones, through want of courage? This is not to follow Thee in that career of self-immolation, upon which Thou, O Jesus, didst enter on the Day of Thy Presentation in the Temple: and yet to resolve not to follow Thee would be cowardice, and an ingratitude of which we would not be guilty. How pleasing to the Heavenly Father must have been that pure and perfect Oblation: we should rejoice in the thought that His glory was thus augmented, and strive to live, so that we might indeed present ourselves to God as living sacrifices.

II. Point.

The oblation of Himself, made by Jesus in the Temple, typified the consecration of ourselves to God.

The sanctification of souls was the second object our Lord had in view, when He was presented in the Temple. In this mystery of sacrifice He consecrated His Life to instruct, to edify, and to win them. There is a beautiful similarity between the dedication of the Life of Jesus, and that of religious persons: are we faithful in trying to preserve it? Since the hour when we presented ourselves in God's House to be dedicated to His service, and that of

our neighbour, have we been zealous and devoted? are we daily glorifying God? do we put away all selfish considerations and personal satisfaction, so that we may better serve others in a spirit of self-sacrificing charity?—We offered ourselves as victims made ready for immolation, and prepared to spend our lives in the service of religion; but if we perceive that the oblation has not been as pure and perfect as it should have been; if since the day of our presentation, we have been more eager to satisfy our self-love, than the claims God and our neighbour have upon us, let us humble ourselves for our want of fidelity; and drawing near to our Lord in the Temple, ask Him to make our oblation more like His own.

Colloquy.

O my Saviour, the generosity of Thy Sacrifice was a most fitting cause of wonder and admiration in the Courts of Heaven; help me to make amends for all that has been imperfect in mine, and permit me to unite it to that most pure offering—that entire oblation—Thou didst make to the Divine Majesty, in the Temple. O Holy Victim, grant that, by Thy merits, my consecration of myself may be perfected; so that by works of zeal, and prayers of charity, I may, during the remainder of my life, fulfil the mission with which God has entrusted me.

Resolution.

To employ this day in beginning to repair that which has been defective in my dedication of myself to the service of God, and my neighbour; unreservedly renewing my promises, and placing them in the hands of Mary.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I come to do Thy Will, O God.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Nineteenth of January.

The Joy of the Saviour.

There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was in him: and he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord: and he came by the Spirit into the Temple: and when they brought in the Child Jesus, he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said: now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the Temple,—the Altar, before which Jesus is presented,—and Simeon holding Him in his arms.

II. PRELUDE.

This is eternal life: to know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. Holy Father, give to

us such a love and knowledge of Thy Dear Son, that we may cause Him to be better known and loved by others.

I. POINT.

What were the sentiments with which Simeon went to the Temple to adore the Saviour?

For four thousand years had the Messias been expected. The holy old man, Simeon, enlightened by a special revelation, desired the Coming of the Saviour most ardently. Can we understand the joy he must have experienced when, having gone to the Temple in compliance with a divine inspiration, he there found Jesus, the Redeemer of Israel? Then full of love and devotion, he takes Him in his arms, presses Him to his heart, and cries out, in a transport of gladness: *Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation.* He does not here call the Infant Jesus, Saviour; but Salvation: which inspired title should make us comprehend that Jesus is, at one and the same time, the Fulness of all grace necessary to save us; and also the Eternal Cause of our desire to be saved:—by Him we have salvation, and He will Himself be our Recompense. How fitting then was the old man's joy; he had the happiness of possessing, of bearing in his arms the Salvation so long expected. "The old man held the Child in his arms: but the Child was the old man's Lord." We envy Simeon perhaps, we wish we had been in his place; but are our privileges less than his? This same Saviour—this Salvation—visits us so often; coming into our hearts, if not into our arms; we may therefore embrace Him, and receive from Him, likewise, the communications of His love. It is for us to compare our feelings of joy and gratitude, with those

of Simeon,—when we find Jesus in the temple of our hearts.—Let us seriously reflect how we enter the House of God; how we acquit ourselves of our exercises of piety, how we approach the holy Altar. Is it with the devotion, fervour, and love which penetrated the soul of this old man? May his faith, his tender piety, revive our own, and cause us to appreciate the treasure we possess in Jesus; and to profit by the Salvation He offers us.

II. POINT.

It is in the holy joy of Simeon that we should especially take part.

Since in the Presence of Jesus Christ, we find our salvation, and possess Him in the midst of us, how is it that His Presence does not excite in our hearts transports of joy and gladness; such as those which ravished the heart of Simeon? The reason is this:—he had for a long while ardently desired to see Him; we on the contrary, from a want of due reflection, desire His Presence so little: and in the realisation of It, appreciate It perhaps still less. If, in our daily prayers, we did not lose sight of Jesus, and of His perfections, we should better know how to render Him our homage of joy and thanksgiving; and should participate in the unspeakable delight of those, who, like Simeon, feel assured they are in possession of Him—the Source—the First Cause of all good. Our lives too should be a continual preparation to receive our Lord; if they were so, each visit from Him would call forth, from our hearts, the glad words of holy Simeon.

COLLOQUY.

Since to know Thee, my God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent, is eternal life, penetrate my heart and

mind with that knowledge which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Of Thee, Who art our Salvation, why is it that I yet know so little? The affection I have for myself, or perhaps for some other creature, places a thick veil between Thee and me, and shuts out the sight of Thy infinite perfections, so that I cannot gain a spiritual insight into them. In mercy, let this veil be torn asunder!—I will endeavour to do my part, by more generously sacrificing all undue earthly attachments, if Thou wilt aid me by the force of Thy grace:—thus, my soul being disentangled from all that is of this world, may I long only for the moment when Thou wilt break the silver cord which detains me here; then may I go, according to Thy word, in peace, to be for ever in Thy Presence.

RESOLUTION.

Generously to overcome the obstacles which prevent my knowing and loving Jesus as I ought.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Lord, my eyes have seen Thy Salvation.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Twentieth of January.

Jesus is the Light of the World.

Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace: because my eyes have seen Thy Salva-

tion: Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the Temple in Jerusalem,—and Simeon holding Jesus in his arms.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Light, Who didst come to dispel our darkness, shine Thou upon our souls, so that enlightened and directed by Thee, I may walk along the narrow path which leads to a happy Eternity.

I. POINT.

Jesus is the Light of our souls.

Before the Birth of Jesus Christ, when thick darkness encompassed the earth, men found it very difficult to follow the way which leads to life eternal. But when the Divine Sun of Justice arose, the shadows were dispersed; and Its bright rays fell upon the human race, and marked out the path of salvation. What an illuminating grace was this, which was offered to all people! but we know that all would not accept it. However brilliant a light may be, they only see it whose eyes are not blinded; but opened and turned towards it. Indifference and human passions often affect our spiritual vision, and render us blind in the midst of light. We see an instance of this in the case of Solomon, who although so wise and favoured by God, was struck with terrible spiritual blindness, and hardness of heart, so that he even erected, in his old age, altars to false gods. Whence came this downfall? From his negligence in suppressing his inclinations, and in refusing to his senses the gratification they demanded, as he himself says: *Whatsoever my*

eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure. What might we not fear for ourselves, we who have not the prudence and the wisdom, and the other special gifts from God, with which this great king had been favoured in his youth, if we should continue unmortified,—cowardly,—or wilfully blinded? But we have this advantage;—we can avail ourselves of the truer Light which Jesus has shed abroad by His Coming: we must be careful then not to close our eyes to it, but pray that we may be *instructed unto salvation* by the illuminating power of His Holy Spirit.

II. POINT.

God has poured on us His Light, so that we may be able to enlighten others.

If our hearts are to resemble the sacred Heart of Jesus, they should possess the characteristics of goodness,—charity,—and zeal for the salvation of all men. The true Sun of Justice reflects on us Its life-giving rays, that we may so *let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father, Who is in Heaven.* In obeying this precept given by our Lord, we shall gain souls for Him, and bring them also out of the shadow of sin and death. We should be on our guard against allowing any obstruction to intervene between the Light of light and our own souls; let there be no resistance to Its divine operations of illuminating and sanctifying them; so may we be prepared to work for God, by preserving others from the contagion of the world; and awaking from the fatal indifference of voluntary blindness those who, having eyes, see not, because they have shut them.

COLLOQUY.

O Jesus, Light of the world, I adore Thee, and thank Thee, with all my heart, for having made the heavenly rays of grace, which emanate from Thee, to shine upon my soul. Chase away the darkness in which I still remain, so that I may appreciate the beauty and the importance of certain verities which I do not yet understand, and see the necessity of certain virtues, which may be wanting in me. Pardon me, O Jesus, for having ever refused the light Thou hast offered me; and which I have not allowed to penetrate my soul. Do Thou intensify it, so that it may overcome all obscurity, and enlighten my blindness.

RESOLUTION.

Carefully to practice that which I see, by the light of grace, would be, in me, most pleasing to Jesus.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Lord, my eyes have seen Thy Salvation.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Twenty-first of January.

Jesus is the glory of His people.

My eyes have seen Thy Salvation: Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us again look at Simeon in the Temple, tenderly

holding Jesus in his arms; his eyes raised towards Heaven. He is blessing God, and asking that he may now depart out of this world.

II. Prelude.

O Lord, make us know and love true glory, which consists in glorying only in Thy Divine Son.

I. Point.

We must seek for glory only in Jesus.

Jesus is the glory of His people: to serve Him,—this is to reign,—to imitate Him,—this is to resemble God;—this is true glory. Have we not despised all else, that we might seek the only glory which is worthy of the children of God? have we not discovered that all that is great in this world, is but vanity? But let us pause here, and see if in our necessary relations with this world, we guard ourselves against adopting its maxims? A glory which is false and quickly decays, abounds there. Let us not be seeking this glory; nor to acquire renown, by means of human knowledge; nor to fill some honourable position. Our desires should never run after these vanities, but should be fixed on the attainment of that true glory, which is found only in Jesus Christ. This glory will be ours: it is assured to us by our divine adoption, by our title, as Spouses of Jesus; by the application of His merits; by the mutual understanding existing between ourselves and our Adorable Master, by means of union and imitation. If the children of the world pursue with such eagerness its vain honours, how should not we strive to acquire the glory which appertains to the true followers of Jesus Christ; that glory which hereafter will render us honourable in the sight of the Angels, and beloved

of God, in that better world, where it will itself be immutable and eternal.

II. POINT.

We shall share in the glory of Jesus, only in so far as we have been united to Him, by conformity to His example.

The spirit of Jesus Christ and the spirit of the world being entirely opposed the one to the other, the manner of life they respectively incite us to adopt, must be equally at variance. If the children of the world pride themselves on all that distinguishes them from, and elevates them above others, if they seek to display their talents, and their merits, we should, on the other hand, use all our advantages, coming as they do from God, for His greater glory alone. If they seek for notice, we should seek to be forgotten, and to be accounted as nothing. If they evince an extreme susceptibility about a slight affront or mortification, we should bear injuries without complaining and even with joy. We should conform our lives to His Life: and whatever it may cost us, we should strive to walk in His Footsteps even though this lead us up to Calvary. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* We have been chosen to reign with God; He wills that we should be raised above all that is of this world: let us live in accordance with the sublimity of our destiny; despise the false glory of the world; take particular care to sacrifice the point of honour on all occasions,—never to consider ourselves wronged,—nor try to justify ourselves: if by these means we faithfully imitate Jesus, He will undoubtedly give us no little share in His eternal glory.

COLLOQUY.

In Thy Presentation, O Lord, Thou didst humble Thyself

to the extent of coming into Thy own Temple as a little feeble child,—divested of all appearance of greatness. I adore Thee, and with holy Simeon, who held Thee in his arms, I recognise in Thee the glory of Thy people. Grant that I may make nothing of the honours of the world, that I may esteem only that glory which I acquire in serving, and loving, and imitating Thee,—whilst I wait for that crown of glory, which Thou art reserving for me in Thy eternal Kingdom.

RESOLUTION.

To relinquish an idea—or point of honour—which would incline me to be self-important,—or self-opinionated, —or to excuse myself,—or to justify myself when accused.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

To God alone be honour and glory.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Twenty-second of January.

Prediction of Simeon.

And Simeon said to Mary, His Mother: this Child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel.

I. PRELUDE.

We see Simeon giving the Infant Jesus back into the

arms of His Mother,—blessing the Holy Family,—and announcing the Mission of the Messias.

II. PRELUDE.

O God, permit not that the abundant graces we have received from Jesus, should turn to our condemnation;—but may we reap the fruits of salvation, which He came to procure for us.

I. POINT.

The graces Jesus bestows, condemn the unfaithful soul that does not profit by them.

The Holy Spirit, when revealing that Jesus Christ was born to be the fall of many, does not intend us to understand that this loss is the result of the divine Will of the Saviour, since it is an article of Faith that He died for all:—but He would thereby have us to understand that the unhappy ones, who would not profit by His Death, would be condemned, without mercy, on account of the graces they have despised. If we, who might be in the fullest enjoyment of God's boundless favours, are indifferent and unmindful of them, and are not, by their means, working out our salvation, what a severe judgment must not we expect? The goodness of our Lord will but justify still more, the reprobation of such. We do right to weigh well the awful truth: *Many are called but few chosen:* so that if we are not exercising great watchfulness over ourselves, our loss is more certain than our salvation. We should reflect seriously on the state of our souls; and see what the love of Jesus is effecting in them;—whether we are making the most of His gifts, and whether we are faithfully fulfilling His holy Law and the duties of our calling. Do not let us wait, until it is too late, to reform our lives.

II. Point.

Jesus bestows His graces in large measure on His faithful ones.

If, as we are told, many souls are their own enemies, and turn to their more complete ruin the coming of our Lord, a vast number, however, by their holy lives, prove indubitably that Jesus was born for the spiritual resurrection of many. Of this number are those whose love is pure, simple, and well directed; who are careful not to covet what is forbidden them; nor that which would deprive them of spiritual freedom, or even lessen it. Faithful souls take pleasure in repeating the pathetic prayer of the author of the *Imitation*, for the cleansing of the heart and the obtaining of heavenly wisdom. "Confirm me, O God, by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Give me power to be strengthened in the inward man, and to cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and trouble. Let me not be drawn away with various desires of any thing whatsoever, whether it be of little or great value; but teach me to look upon all things as passing away, and myself as passing along with them. For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. O how wise is he who considers things in this manner!" In accordance with our prayer, may we be hereafter numbered with the Saints: Jesus desires this: He wills to make us Saints; but we must contract a spiritual union with Him and allow ourselves to be led by His Spirit.

Colloquy.

O Jesus, Thou art the inexhaustible Treasury, whence come the gifts of grace which ensure our salvation: how is it that having Thee so near to me, and at my disposal the precious riches which are hidden in the Sacraments of Thy

Church, my soul is still so languishing and so faint? I humbly confess before Thee, that my want of fervour in my exercises of piety, and in receiving Holy Communion, is the cause of these defects;—to my indolence, and the feebleness of my desires, I owe my spiritual losses. Pardon my indifference, O my Saviour, and make me henceforth, so to *hunger and thirst after justice that I may be filled* with strengthening and abiding grace.

RESOLUTION.

To pray with more fervour, and with more confidence;—having recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Many are called, but few are chosen.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Twenty-third of January.

Prophecy of Simeon (continued).

This Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel; and for a Sign which shall be contradicted: that out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us go in spirit into the Temple at Jerusalem, and there see Simeon, giving back the Holy Child into His

Mother's arms, as he says to her: *He shall be for a Sign which shall be contradicted: and thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Saviour, fill us with Thy Spirit, that It may render us unshaken in trials and difficulties; and that, after having trodden in Thy Footsteps, we may follow Thee into the Abode of eternal rest.

I. POINT.

In trials and difficulties, true virtue is recognisable.

When all goes smoothly, and nothing interferes with our desires,—our pious projects,—nor our laudable enterprises, it may be, that contended self-love is the cause of the peace we enjoy: but when, for instance, ingratitude and annoyances are the payment we receive for our charity and devotedness, and we, in this trial, remain unmoved, then our motives are supernatural.—It is most useful to look into ourselves, and see on what foundation our virtue rests; it is not difficult to find this out:—if we lose somewhat of our ardour when not applauded,—or if our courage flags when our good deeds attract no attention, save perhaps to be condemned—then it is clear the spiritual edifice is being built on quicksands; even the breath of contradiction will soon overthrow it. But if we seek, under all circumstances, only to please God, if our zeal augments in the midst of contempt,—calumny,—persecution,—let us bless the Lord: then is our virtue solid. This solidity will be gradually acquired, if we profit by all our trials; whether they be great or small.

II. POINT.

They who truly belong to Jesus must expect to suffer.

It is not only in the midst of the world that the just meet with vexations and trials; but within the cloister—everywhere indeed—human passions enter. The true friends of our Crucified Lord must await suffering, as He did; those whom He loves most, receive from His Hand, His own Chalice of affliction. It is in this way that the Divine Master proves the fidelity of His friends;—trials rightly borne do but increase their love for Him. If we are crucified with Jesus Christ, we shall have joy of heart in this world, and shall possess our souls in peace. Was it not to Mary, to the well-beloved Daughter of our Father, that Simeon predicted that her soul should be pierced with the sword of grief? Shall not we then, her children, who earnestly desire to be loved by her First-born Son, willingly help to bear His Cross, and to drink of His Chalice? Seeing then that suffering purifies—enriches—and unites the disciple to the Master, are we not thankful to be able thus to merit a glorious and immortal crown? Let us therefore not fear trials—but accept them gladly; considering the precious advantages that Faith discovers in them.

Colloquy.

I adore the designs of Thy Providence, O Lord; and with my whole heart I would say continually: "Nothing happens to me but that which it pleases Thee to ordain; may Thy Holy Name be praised for all!" Increase my faith,—give me patience,—and strengthen my soul in virtue. I am weak, it is true; but I depend on Thy assistance to preserve me from the snares of the devil; and to make me find my happiness in following Thee along the road to Heaven, traced out by Thy Cross.

RESOLUTION.

To accept for love of Jesus and His Cross, the various acts of mortification which the perfect accomplishment of our duties necessitates.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Blessed are they who suffer for justice sake.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Twenty-fourth of January.

Presentation of Jesus Christ in the Temple.

After the days of Mary's purification were accomplished, they carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord: and Simeon came by the Spirit into the Temple: Anna, a prophetess, at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord; and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel.

I. PRELUDE.

We again represent to ourselves the road leading to Jerusalem,—the Temple there,—with its Altar,—before which Jesus was presented.

II. PRELUDE.

O God, Who dost give to us, in Thy Son Jesus, a perfect example of a complete consecration to Thyself: grant, we beseech Thee, that imitating Him, we may be wholly Thine, and that for ever.

I. POINT.

Let us consider the persons, and listen to their words.

Being again led to the contemplation of the Infant Jesus, as He was carried to the Temple and offered to God by His Parents, we should strive to better comprehend the extent, the generosity, and the perfection of this Oblation. Our Saviour, in this fulfilling of the Law, gave Himself up, by the hands of Mary and Joseph, without reservation, to suffering and to death; henceforth He is devoted;—and to what? to the overcoming of the enemies of God and Man: *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.* But during that ceremony of the Presentation the world knew nothing of what was going on; of the pure, the noble, the generous Sacrifice that was being made before God's Altar. Four witnesses there were, who realised the fact that He Who was on that day called *holy to the Lord* was the Salvation of the world.—Mary, Joseph, the old man Simeon, and the widow Anna; they saw their Lord beneath the veil of humanity. Of these four humble personages, His Mother Mary is specially chosen, to take part in the Sacrifice of her Adorable Son:—the Divine Oracle announces that *He will be for a Sign which shall be contradicted, and that her own soul a sword shall pierce:* well may we pray that, by the merits of Jesus and Mary, we may obtain grace to repair the deficiencies in our dedication of ourselves, and that it may be made more complete.

II. POINT.

Let us consider the actions of those whom we see in the Temple.

Jesus is placed in the arms of the priest, the Sacrifice

begins, He is lifted up between Heaven and earth, the Divine Holocaust is to be consumed by the sacred Flame of Love, which burns within His Heart. Mary unites her sacrifice to His, and God the Father, looking down from Heaven, accepts with complacency the perfect Oblation. Saint Joseph, together with Simeon and Anna, gaze in reverent wonder at the Holy Child and His Mother, and praise and adore God His Father. We learn a lesson too from the consideration of the humble gift, with which Mary redeemed her Divine Son:—*a pair of young pigeons:—for her hand found not sufficiency to give more.* She was poor,—and she gave the offering of the poor,—the price of the redemption of the Son of God, paid by His lowly Handmaid, places the precious Treasure again in her possession. Thus God recompensed her humility. Let us not neglect acts of humility:—so valuable in God's sight are they, that He will reward them, even in this life; for Jesus will Himself draw near, and dwell in the soul of the humble.

Colloquy.

O Lord, in all Thy Mysteries, Thou art our Teacher.—From that of Thy Presentation, I learn that I should seek after a truer spirit of sacrifice; reminding myself unceasingly, that after having given myself to Thee,—my heart—my will—my senses—are no longer at my own disposal: I can now only use them in loving Thee, and in fulfilling Thy good pleasure. May I never forget that whilst generosity is a duty, humility and modesty delight Thy Heart; and merit the enjoyment of Thy Presence within our Souls.

Resolution.

I will renew often during the day, the consecration of myself to God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Twenty-fifth of January.

The Conversion of St. Paul.

See Page 242.

Twenty-sixth of January.

The Flight into Egypt.

An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee: For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child, to destroy Him.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us see Saint Joseph announcing to the Blessed Virgin the Angel's warning; in the middle of night, they made preparations for immediate departure.

II. PRELUDE.

Give us, O Lord, a spirit of lively faith, that we may see

Thy representatives in those who have authority over us; and accomplish Thy Will with promptness and generosity.

I. POINT.

An Angel commanded, on behalf of God, the Holy Family to fly into Egypt. He appeared to Saint Joseph when he was sleeping. Why, we may inquire, did the heavenly Messenger address Saint Joseph? Did he surpass the Holy Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin in sanctity?—in wisdom?—or was he more enlightened? Far from it; but he was the head of the household,—and therefore God's representative: he was the rightful delegate of certain powers given from Heaven; it was for him to communicate the message to Mary; and she must awaken, and get ready the Child. All legitimate power comes directly from God: faithful souls should observe carefully that beautiful order, which reigns wherever God is the Sovereign Master: any tendency to overthrow it is full of danger, since it proves a want of faith and of obedience. Therefore at all times, to obey them whom God has set over us to interpret to us His Will, and to be the depositaries of His authority, is a safe rule. We may not prefer our own will, nor our own mode of action, if these run counter to the precept: *Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God.* This point is very important: on it depends our growth in holiness.

II. POINT.

The Holy Family obeyed at once, without questioning the command given.

In Saint Joseph we see the spirit of faith, in which he obeyed God, after the warning of the Angel: and in our Lady, deference towards Saint Joseph, who announced

to her the Will of God. Neither of them examine the reasons He may have had in giving this order; He had spoken, that was sufficient. They quit Nazareth:—regret at leaving their home, or uncertainty about finding means of subsistence in a foreign land, give rise to no hesitation; they see but one thing—that is, the Will of God,—and they accomplish it. Is it thus we submit to the commands of God? are we content to be disposed of peremptorily, without any regard being paid to our inclinations and wishes? Is there perfect resignation, when obedience demands some sacrifice? we may have to leave some place, or community, or occupations which are dear to us:—can we do this cheerfully, without reasoning?—without disquietude? They are miserable, and worthy of compassion who cannot submit blindly to God's designs; they actually oppose them, and raise obstacles to thwart His purposes. Of how many graces do such persons deprive themselves, in consequence of disobedience;—they would do well to ask themselves what real good they can effect, if they are out of those places and employments to which God called them. Let us be careful then, always to imitate the Holy Family, in the entire abandonment with which they obeyed the commands brought by the Angel. Such proofs of obedience will be for us, as for Mary and Joseph, the cause of fresh favours from God, Whose liberality equals His justice.

Colloquy.

I thank Thee, O Jesus, that Thou hast deigned to place before me, such admirable examples of obedience and submissiveness. I believe that Thou dost love and protect those, who make it their chief study to please Thee, as Mary and Joseph did. I confess, with humility, that my obedience is wanting in those qualities, which give to it, in Thy Sight,

both beauty and merit. Obtain for me, O Mary and Joseph, to imitate the promptitude—simplicity—and generosity of your obedience.

RESOLUTION.

To obey in the spirit of Faith, seeing God in the person who commands.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I come to do Thy will, O my God.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Twenty-seventh of January.

Flight into Egypt.

An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph: Saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee: For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the Blessed Virgin preparing the Infant Jesus for the departure; and the Holy Family starting forth on their journey, in the middle of the night.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Infant, by escaping from the fury of an angry prince, Thou teachest us to withdraw from the dangers of

the world; grant that, penetrated with Thy Spirit, we may fly from its snares.

I. POINT.

Jesus leaves the land of His Birth to show us that we do well to quit the world and its questionable advantages.

It was neither weakness nor fear which caused the flight of the Saviour from Nazareth: He, the Master over all human life, might, by a single act of His Will have destroyed His cruel persecutor; and blotted out his name. But it was not that He feared Herod. He would put us on our guard against the world, of which this prince was a figure. Jesus flies from danger, to teach us to fly from it, though it be at the expense of forsaking all that is most dear; yes! even our most legitimate pleasures; we dare not hesitate for one moment, if our salvation be imperiled. The world is full of hidden dangers; in it there are innumerable snares; its maxims are false,—its pleasures are seductive,—it furnishes examples which lead others astray:—these considerations have made us resolve to seek in Religion a safe harbour, where we are sheltered from the perils which lie outside. Still we must examine and see if we are free from the spirit of the world; this often follows us into the seclusion of the cloister even; our heart may not perhaps be safe from its infection; we are greatly to be pitied if such be the case.

II. POINT.

Jesus returned to Nazareth, only when told by the Angel that it was safe to do so.

The Son of God, the All-mighty, the All-wise, kept at a distance from His enemy, until the Angel came—at the expiration of seven years of exile—to announce to Joseph

that danger for the Son of Mary was no longer to be apprehended. We should profit by this instance of holy prudence. Our Divine Example teaches us to let the extent of our withdrawal from the world be in conformity with the practices enjoined by our rules. In quitting our solitude through obedience, in order to perform works of pious zeal,—of charity,—or to engage in some apostolic labour, we need not fear danger from the crafty cruelty of our Herod; for if the world be dead to us, and we are dead to the world, none of its evils can effect us.—If we take our Rules for our guide, they will be also our safeguard; we shall act aright, if we follow the counsel of those who should direct us: but should the spirit of obedience be wanting, we have cause to fear even that which appears to be good. If, however, we have a work given us to do in the world, we must be extremely watchful lest we fall into the snare of our other enemy,—the devil. He knows that we are aspiring after perfection; he will therefore employ some suitable artifice to surprise us, and make us slip; and the most ordinary is to seduce us by the appearance of good; not representing to our notice any direct evil, knowing that what is clearly wrong, would not be consented to. Whilst then we are safe from the allurements of the world when acting under obedience, and in a spirit of pure charity, we run the risk of perishing if, through presumption or frivolity, we allow worldliness to creep back into our hearts. Let us then shun with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, all that is of the world; in the midst of the Holy Family we shall be safe from all the effects of a worldly spirit; such as tepidity, —relaxation,—or disgust for a life of piety.

Colloquy.

O my Saviour, if Thou, Who art God Almighty, didst

fly the persecution of a cruel prince, what temerity would it be on my part to take a step towards any occasion of danger to my soul. I know, but too well, that I dare not rely on my own strength. Do Thou deign to enlighten me more and more with regard to my own weakness; may I have a holy fear at the approach of spiritual dangers; and if in the way of duty, I am ever exposed to them, encompass me with Thy powerful protection, and shelter me from all harm.

RESOLUTION.

To shun the world, and avoid all that may endanger my salvation, remembering that evil is often disguised under the appearance of good.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

All things work together unto good, to such as love God.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Twenty-eighth of January.

Journey of the Child Jesus to Egypt.

An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

We see before us the long and perilous journey which the

Holy Family was obliged to undertake in order to reach that foreign land—Egypt.

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour, in becoming thus an exile, Thou didst merit for us the grace of being able to break even the ties of nature, for Thy Sake. Inspire us with detachment from all things of earth, so that our affections may tend towards our celestial Country.

I. POINT.

Jesus, in leaving His native land, teaches us to be unfettered by the world; and to look upon ourselves as being in perpetual exile.

We may consider the Flight of our Divine Saviour, not as a simple voluntary removal from His own country, but as a banishment, which was to last for several years; and this He accepted willingly, with all its privations and its inconvenience. Let us place, side by side with this consideration, the words of the Psalmist: *Forget thy people and thy father's house: And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty.* A great doctor of the church says:—"he who loves his country, so that only in it he can find happiness, is still weak and feeble;—he, who can look upon all places alike as his home, is strong and magnanimous;—but he, to whom the whole world is a place of exile, is perfect". How happy should we be, if we could put away all mere human affections: if, finding God everywhere, we feared no change of place,—of country,—or of employment. Holy indifference will render its possessor content and submissive to God's divine Will, under all circumstances:—therefore we should pray, that we may be strengthened against our

own weakness, which draws us back to earthly things—that our Lord abandon us not, but preserve our hearts from becoming attached to any thing created. Our true Home is Heaven, thither let us direct all our affections, all our desires, all our thoughts.

II. POINT.

The marvellous effects of the sojourn made by Jesus in Egypt.

Although apparently the Divine Child did nothing great or important in Egypt, nevertheless, from this visit germinated those surprising consequences, which were to result from it. His holy Presence, His austere and mortified Life, His Prayers, His Tears, produced after a time the greatest benefits, and the fruits of salvation in abundance. His stay in that country drew down the richest blessings Heaven could bestow, on the thousands of Saints who afterwards made it illustrious. Following the example of the Holy Family in their submissive obedience, let us go into Egypt; that is to say, into the places to which God calls us. Doubtless we may meet with trials and privations, perchance only afflictions await us, but let us go with confidence and resignation. There let us suffer patiently all that it may please God to give us to endure; and for as long as He wills. It is in Heaven we shall enjoy the recompense, merited by our submission; there we shall see and know why God thus drew us away from the dangers of the world; and praise Him through eternity, for having permitted us to pass the time of our exile in His immediate service;—in prayer, in works of charity and zeal,—in drawing hearts to the love of God,—and in extending His Kingdom.

COLLOQUY.

Divine Infant, how liberally didst Thou repay the hospitality shown towards Thyself in a distant land. The little services rendered Thee are largely recompensed. How right and advantageous is it to be liberal in Thy regard. I beseech Thee, come and dwell in the midst of us,—sanctify our dwelling-place with Thy holy presence, and make it the home of every virtue, and of all good works.

RESOLUTION.

To preserve in myself the spirit of detachment;—loving friends and relations only in God, and for God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Twenty-ninth of January.

The Return from Egypt.

Joseph arose, took the Child and His Mother, and came into the Land of Israel.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us look again at the road, by which Jesus and His Parents travel; they are now on their way back from Egypt.

II. Prelude.

Teach us, O Lord, to receive thankfully at Thy Hands, both good and evil;—and in imitation of the Holy Family, to have no self-will.

I. Point.

Jesus Christ leaves Egypt, by the command of His Heavenly Father.

Jesus received the order to come away from Egypt, with the same obedience that He had received the command to go, and sojourn there, seven years before: He went, and He returned, through obedience. This liberation from exile teaches us that affliction is not interminable; but we must remain beneath its shadow, until God sees fit to remove it; thus in sickness,—disgrace,—desolation,—or any other trial, we should only wish to be delivered from it, when God pleases. In case of even long delay, we ought not to grow downcast, nor weary; but listen to the words which He Himself will say to us interiorly: *Be there until I shall tell Thee;* "have neither will nor choice of your own; I desire to see you stripped of yourself, and abandoned to Me". Who can become capable of enduring such a spoliation of self, if it be not they who are called to perfection? and who are learning from our Lord Himself, not to be afflicted by the adversities met with in this world. He sends them; can we refuse them? Surely not, if we remember: *All things work together unto good, to such as love God.* Are we practically certain of this truth? If so, we may often share with the Holy Family in the quiet joy they experienced, when their days of exile were over: simply because they knew that it was God who had spoken, saying: *Out of Egypt have I called My Son.* In all the events of life may

we maintain calmness and peace in our souls, and receive with respect all that comes to us from God.

II. Point.

Jesus returns to Nazareth.

Our Divine Saviour returned to Nazareth, only after the death of Herod, and of those who, with him, had desired to take the life of the Young Child. Hence we learn that He will not take up His abode in our souls, rest there—nor find pleasure in them—until His worst enemies are dead. He would not even enter the city of Jerusalem, because Archelaus reigned there in the room of his father.—Jesus returned forthwith to Nazareth; He cannot dwell with vice, nor in the midst of the tumult of passion:—to enjoy His Presence we must love and practise virtue. Would we, by culpable negligence, render ourselves unworthy of this favour? Are we, rather, carefully labouring to banish from our hearts all that might keep Jesus away from them? pride and sensuality, for instance. A true Spouse of His thinks nothing too little to arrest careful attention, and cause great watchfulness: no truce must be made with the enemies of Jesus Christ, however weak they may appear; none protected: *but he that is holy will still be sanctified*, in order hereafter to enjoy the vision of the Bridegroom, promised to those that are pure in heart.

Colloquy.

There is not any event in Thy Life which does not offer me some useful instruction. O Good Master, make my heart like Thine, so that, as Thou didst, I may abandon myself entirely to God's guidance, and may receive with thanksgiving, sweetness or bitterness,—joy or sorrow.—

Fearing nought but sin, may my heart become so pure, that Thou, O Jesus, mayst find nothing therein to displease Thee; but mayst deem it a fitting dwelling-place for Thyself; and may I live in Thee, by the communication of Thy Spirit and Thy Love.

RESOLUTION.

To combat with renewed energy my imperfections, and my uncorrected faults.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Be there until I shall tell Thee.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Thirtieth of January.

Jesus—the Source of grace.

And the Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in Him.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us picture to ourselves the lowly abode of Jesus, in Nazareth:—and visit Him there.

II. PRELUDE.

Discover to us, O Saviour, the infinite treasures of grace hidden within Thy Sacred Heart; and deign to teach us how to obtain Thy gifts.

I. POINT.

Jesus is the Source of all grace.

The grace of God was in Him. After what manner was this grace in Jesus? Was it, as it is in the souls of the just, limited in degree? Surely not. Was it as in the soul of Mary, who possessed it in such abundance, that the Angel Gabriel saluted her thus: *Hail, full of grace?* Again, we must answer,—no. The gifts of God in her, although so profuse, were not essential: they were not infinite. Grace enriched and beautified Mary; but Jesus could not be enriched by it, since He is its Fountain: all its value,—all its beauty, is derived from Him, Who being God, is the Source of all and every spiritual favour: Who being Man merits and dispenses gifts of grace. *To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ.* Can we say that various graces find unity in Jesus? that they flow together unto Him? This is not saying enough; for there is a wide difference between an unfailing spring, and the full supply even in the basin, which receives its waters, although the latter may, in its turn, extend their flow. The Divine Source, the Eternal Spring of grace, is what we to-day contemplate; we find it in the Heart of the Child, Who is passing His Boyhood with Joseph and Mary at Nazareth. Yes! from that Heart will flow forth Living Water, even until the end of time; spreading itself, like a flood, over the whole Earth: and more,—for in the Kingdom of Heaven *Jesus shall lead the Blessed to the fountains of the Water of Life*, proceeding ever from that same Sacred Heart, to fill them with delight unspeakable. Come! let us again adore the Child at Nazareth; the Author of all grace: let us adore and bless and love its inexhaustible Source.

II. POINT.

From Jesus we may obtain every grace.

In Jesus all grace dwells, that most precious of all treasures,—most efficacious of all remedies,—sweetest of all nourishment. We are poor, let us draw out of this Treasury:—we are sick, let us seek this Remedy:—we are languishing, let us partake of this Nourishment. It will renew our strength, and sustain us into life eternal. The faithful soul finds in the graces bestowed on her, by her Well-beloved, the same qualities that one finds in the pure waters of a large river; they fertilise the fields through which they flow, and inundate the plain:—sometimes as a torrent, sweeping away obstacles that obstruct their course;—then passing tranquilly along the channel they have made for themselves. The soul is sometimes inundated by the floods of divine grace, after humbling herself, perhaps deeply before God; or pleasing Him by some act of obedience or submission. Sometimes the streams of grace roll over the passions and affections, to subdue and purify them:—at others they flow calmly and peacefully;—fructifying the soul,—enduing her with many virtues. *Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will bring upon her, as it were, a river of peace.*

COLLOQUY.

Adorable Jesus, Author and Source of all grace, I adore Thee, and thank Thee, that Thou dost invite me to draw from Thee, fresh supplies of grace in all my necessities. Thou seest how extreme is my weakness;—how I need Thy grace every moment to keep me from falling,—to strengthen me,—to sanctify me. In order to preserve my spiritual life, do Thou bestow on me such grace as is sufficient for me.

RESOLUTION.

To keep myself closely united to the Heart of Jesus;—thence to obtain light, strength and grace; for myself, and those for whom I pray.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Thirty-first of January.

Jesus, at the age of twelve years, went up to Jerusalem.

His Parents went every year to Jerusalem; at the solemn Day of the Pasch: And when He was twelve years old, they went up, according to the custom of the Feast; and when they returned, the Child Jesus remained at Jerusalem: and His Parents knew it not. They sought Him, and after three days found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors; hearing them and asking them questions.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to our minds, the city of Jerusalem, and its Temple.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Saviour, give me grace to know, to love, and to imitate the obedience, poverty and humility of which Thou

didst set us so striking an example in the Mystery on which we are about to meditate.

I. POINT.

Jesus Christ, in going to the Temple, practised obedience.

The Saviour of the world went to the Temple at Jerusalem every year, as the Law prescribed; fulfilling the days, according to the command of God. In this the Son did exactly that which the Father had ordained; and began the work for which He came on earth. We see how perfect was His obedience to the Law: do we obey, with the same fidelity, and the same love, God's commandments? those of Holy Church? and our own particular Rule of life? Have we these constantly before our eyes, so that we may put them into practice? If human reason, to justify our cowardice, would have us believe that in the infraction of certain commands there is no sin, Jesus, by His conduct, tells us that the slightest infringement disturbs good order, slackens our fervour, and insensibly destroys piety. Worthless is the toil and labour of those who reject discipline; we should bear this in mind,—and following the example of Jesus, give to God a continual proof of our love, respect and submission, by our exactness in fulfilling His holy Law.

II. POINT.

Jesus practised poverty.

Every year Jesus went up to the Temple. Notwithstanding the fatigue He must have felt considering the feebleness of childhood, He went to Jerusalem on foot, accompanied by Joseph and Mary. How great and precious a virtue does poverty become, when practised by Jesus!—how is it

that we do not practise it better, and out of love for Him, when we see how He esteemed it? He would teach us to despise all that ease and luxury, which is but too common in the world. And does it not happen, only too often, that religious persons shrink from fatigues and privations; and will not bear inconveniences, because they are slaves to the over-carefulness they have for themselves. We should be observant, lest we form any such habit. Let us, on the contrary, forget ourselves, and die to ourselves,—so that we may live the life of Jesus, which was so poor and mortified.

Colloquy.

O Jesus, Perfect Model of all virtue, I adore Thee, I beseech Thee to give me a higher esteem, and love of obedience and poverty. I feel that there have been many failures in regard to these virtues, with which to reproach myself; but having now understood more of their excellence, by the study of Thy example, I desire lovingly and faithfully to accomplish those holy laws which Thou hast laid down for me.

Resolution.

Not to be too much occupied with myself, but to refuse that over-carefulness towards myself, which egotism demands.

Thought for the Day.

I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.

Prayer.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

First of February.

Jesus remains in Jerusalem.

The Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His Parents knew it not: and they sought Him.—S. Luke ii.

I. Prelude.

Let us represent to ourselves the Child Jesus remaining behind in the Temple. Mary and Joseph are on the road from Jerusalem to Nazareth. We may well imagine their surprise and trouble, when they discover that Jesus is not with them.

II. Prelude.

Grant to us, O Divine Saviour, the grace to understand the intentions of Thy Sacred Heart, in thus afflicting Thy most holy Mother; and may we imitate her perfect submissiveness.

I. Point.

Why did Jesus cause His Mother to have thus to seek for Him?

We are right in penetrating into this secret of the Divine Heart, and asking of Jesus why He thus acted. Why He, so full of goodness and tenderness, caused His Mother so much pain.—Jesus, by remaining in Jerusalem, unknown to His Parents, would remind them that He depended on them, only to the extent defined by the Heavenly Father's Will.—He would also make use of this bitter trial to give them an opportunity of acquiring new merit. He would likewise

furnish all faithful souls, for whom He foresaw spiritual difficulties, with a motive for consolation:—the example of His own dear Mother would be a proof to them, that such trials are less a punishment, than a pure effect of His love. —And further, we should understand this great lesson; that the obedience we owe to God, and our zeal for His glory, should render us ever ready to sacrifice natural tenderness. Doubtless His Adorable Heart felt keenly the anguish He had to inflict on the heart of His Mother, in order to conform her more entirely to His Heavenly Father's Will; but He well knew how to compensate for this, by an increase of divine favours. We desire to live in the midst of consolations;—but if we were thoroughly convinced, that it is advantageous to suffer mortification, since it increases our resemblance to Jesus Christ, we should seek no mere natural satisfaction:—we should even love to carry the heaviest crosses. We ought, indeed, to reckon our tribulations as the most precious graces Heaven can bestow, for they have the effect of making us die to ourselves, and to the world; and they procure for us the unexpressible happiness of living for God alone. O most Good Jesus, Thou art ever the Same; whether Thou favourest us with Thy divine consolations, or triest us in the furnace of affliction, wherein we find no apparent alleviation, let us remember Thy promise: *I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee.*

II. Point.

We may lose the sensible Presence of God—not by our fault.

Mary's loss of Her Son teaches us, that it is possible to be deprived of His Presence without having been guilty of any infidelity. Doubtless if we lost it by committing a mortal

sin, we should be in the same sad case as those sinners who wilfully turn away from God;—if we should lose the enjoyment of the divine Presence through a venial sin we must place ourselves amongst the imperfect;—but to be deprived of sensible devotion, and to have to bear the privation of spiritual consolation, through no fault of our own, this would be to lose God, as our Lady lost Jesus;—as the Saints have undergone this privation, in moments of desolation and obscurity:—but they have not lost thereby either peace of soul, or perfect resignation. Jesus disappeared.—The Divine Spouse goes and comes according to His good pleasure.—He visits us in the morning;—in the evening we seek Him, and cannot find Him. We must adore the inscrutable secrets of God, as Mary did. His dearest friends appear often to be treated in a manner, severe and hard; but His purpose is, to purify their love,—strengthen their virtue,—increase their merits,—and keep them in humility.

Colloquy.

Divine Saviour, to advance the ends of Thy infinite wisdom, (which are ever worthy of it) Thou dost communicate to souls the light of Thy grace and the fire of Thy charity,—or Thou dost leave them in desolation and darkness with seeming unconcern; I humbly adore the designs of Thy Providence; I fully submit to them. If Thou wilt that I should be in the midst of peace and spiritual joy, all praise be to Thee: only in this case, give me strength to accept, and to drink to the dregs of the chalice Thou hast set aside for me. But, O Jesus, may I never lose Thee by any want of religious gravity,—by any indulgence of too natural an attachment,—nor by any deliberate infidelity.

RESOLUTION.

To practise to-day, great watchfulness over myself; that I lose not Jesus by any voluntary fault.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

It is expedient to you that I go.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Second of February.

Feast of the Purification.

See Page 248.

Third of February.

Loss of Jesus.

And having fulfilled the days, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us imagine to ourselves the anxiety with which Mary and Joseph sought for Jesus.

II. Prelude.

O God, fill our souls with holy fear at the sight of those infidelities, which might deprive us of the happiness of possessing Thee.

I. Point.

What a misfortune it is for a soul to lose Jesus, through any unfaithfulness.

There cannot be a greater unhappiness than the unhappiness of one, who is unfaithful to God's grace; and especially to the grace of a religious vocation :—for thus peace—true peace is lost. The soul is thrown into trouble and alarm: on the one hand, there is the love of Jesus misunderstood and forgotten ;—holy engagements violated, remorse of conscience,—and fear of the judgments of God: —on the other hand, there is human passion; under the burden of which, God leaves this soul for its punishment,—it becomes its torturer, and vainly does it seek to be free from this cruel tyranny. God has withdrawn Himself,—repose in Himself cannot be found. He appears not to hear the cry of the faithless soul; for how long a time He may see fit to leave it, weeping and lamenting over its misery, who can say? The Bridegroom has been outraged, —in mercy He avenges the injury done to Him; the period of expiation may last through weary years. But still there is hope; and persevering repentance is the road, by which to seek, and find Jesus once again—after imploring His mercy and asking His pardon. O God, keep us, we beseech Thee, from the misfortune of losing Thee by our own fault ;—*Be with us, leave us not, nor cast us off.*

II. POINT.

It is a great misfortune for a soul to be insensible to the loss of Jesus.

Although, as we have seen, it is so sad for a faithless soul to feel its unhappy condition and be a prey to grief, yet grace may be said to be the cause of this suffering; and though, perhaps almost imperceptibly, it does support and encourage it in its endeavours to find its God again. There is a sadder picture still;—that of a soul that sees not the danger of its state, but remains insensible to its forsaken condition; sleeping in fatal calmness on the brink of the precipice, to awake only in falling into the abyss of eternal loss. It is well to pause and think of the hopelessness of a wilfully blinded soul; that is content to live out of the Presence of God. To avoid this, let us be faithful to the holy engagements we have contracted,—let us watch over our hearts that none may share them with Jesus. They should be His alone; therefore ought we to break, even from the outset of the religious life, those ties which would bind us too closely to creatures. Let us preserve great tenderness of conscience; for the soul may be tarnished, not only by mortal sin, and the revolt of human passions, but also by apparently lesser faults, which have the effect of lowering the degree of union with God. And again, let us walk in humility, after our Beloved;—treading in His Footsteps, we shall not lose sight of Him, by our fault.

COLLOQUY.

O Heavenly Spouse, to Whom I owe all,—the joy of serving Thee, and the many favours received in Religion, I acknowledge the justice of the claims Thou hast over my heart—my whole being. If I have been unfaithful towards

Thee, it is just and right that I should suffer. More than this, it is advantageous. When through some fault, I lose Thy company, fill my heart with deep compunction;—with tears of sorrow may I retrace my wayward steps, until I find Thee. O Mary, my Mother, do thou then help me to return to Thy Dear Son, and tell Him, for me, that *I have sought Him sorrowing.*

RESOLUTION.

To avoid the misfortune of losing Jesus, I will sacrifice my natural inclinations.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Thy Face, O Lord, will I still seek.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Fourth of February.

In what way we should seek Jesus.

Mary and Joseph sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: And not finding Him they returned to Jerusalem.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Mary and Joseph looking for the Holy Child Jesus with affectionate concern and diligence.

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour, may we see, by thy blessed Mother's example, with what carefulness we should seek Thee.

I. POINT.

The Blessed Virgin Mary sought her Son, without delay.

As soon as Mary and Joseph perceived their loss, we may feel sure that they were exceedingly afflicted; that they prayed instantly, and began at once to search for Jesus, with such earnestness, that they merited the happiness of finding Him. Such should be our conduct, when either to prove us, or to chastise us, He withdraws from us for a season. As soon as we find ourselves deprived of His Presence, without delay, let us seek Him; by quickly looking into our own hearts,—humbling ourselves,—and repenting of and correcting the defects which may have caused *God to hide His Face a little while from us.* We should lose no time, but at once implore Him to be favourable in our regard; calling upon Him, as our Well-beloved; and repeating the words of the Spouse in the Canticles: *He has turned aside and is gone; I call and He does not answer; I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you will tell Him that I languish with love.* If we truly love Him with an undivided affection, we shall not seek Him in vain. But their prayers are not of value in His sight, whose hearts are not attached to Him only:—to such He cannot make good His promise: *Seek and you shall find.* Jesus is our Life, our Joy, our Treasure. Should we not seek Him with our whole hearts?

II. POINT.

Like Mary, we must search for Jesus perseveringly.

The carefulness with which the Mother sought for her Son was the result of her love and ardent desire to see Him again.—Her first inquiries having been unavailing, she retraced her steps; and gave herself no rest until her loss had been repaired. Such are the effects produced by divine love in the soul,—it conceives so lively a sorrow when deprived of the Object of this love, that in us, as in Mary when crossing the hills of Judea, the words of questioning arise: *Have you found Him Whom my soul loveth?* She sought Him, as we should do, by night and by day; with a longing heart and untiring perseverance; there is no sacrifice she would not have made; nothing that she would not have done, to look once again upon the Face of her Dear Child. Do we seek His Face with the same perseverance? the same love? What do we do when we feel that It is turned away from us?

Colloquy.

Jesus!—by the help of Thy grace I desire to imitate Thy Mother and Saint Joseph in the active, loving, untiring search they made, after they had lost Thee. Grant me, by their intercession, and by the merits of Thy Sacred Heart, to attach myself so closely to Thee, that henceforth nothing may separate me from Thy Company. When through my weakness, I am about to stray, recall to me my promises,—remind me of the gift I have made of myself to Thee; draw me more closely to Thyself by the ties of love, so that nought of human affection may sever this holy bond of union.

Resolution.

To seek Jesus with love, earnestness, and perseverance; and at once:—to-morrow it might be too late.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

And when thou shalt seek the Lord Thy God, thou shalt find Him; yet so, if Thou seek Him with all thy heart.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Fifth of February.

Jesus is found in the Temple.

After three days, they found Him in the Temple.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the Temple at Jerusalem.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant to us, Lord, the grace to love the place where Thou dost chiefly make Thy Presence known and felt.

I. POINT.

It was not amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance, that Mary and Joseph found Jesus.

In vain was the Holy Child sought for, amongst even His own relations, friends or neighbours;—they found Him not there:—but in the Holy City,—in the Temple,—occupied about His Heavenly Father's business. He had already begun to practise that which in after years He preached, even before great multitudes: *If any man come to Me, and*

hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters; yea, and his own life also; he cannot be My disciple.—Thus He traces out that truth; which, throughout all ages, has gathered around Him numberless souls, whose highest interest has been God's glory, in close connexion with that of their own perfection. Unquestionably our Lord does not here command us to entertain any feeling of aversion towards others, for He, Who is Love, tells us to love each other: but He desires that those who embrace the Religious Life and have once left all for His Sake, should hereafter be chiefly occupied in doing the work the Heavenly Father has appointed to be done by them.—No affection for kindred nor friends must be permitted, which could hinder them from lovingly accomplishing it.—Where the love of God reigns, that of creatures and of self must be denied entrance, if the affection for these be not in, and for, God alone;—all human love, lost in the love of God.—Jesus devoted Himself entirely to the service of our Father, we must do likewise; and since earthly attachments, cares, and pre-occupations turn aside both heart and mind, let us remember another injunction, implied in these words of our Lord: *No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

II. POINT.

It was in the Temple at Jerusalem that Mary and Joseph found Jesus.

It was not in the busy streets of the City that Jesus was found, but in the Temple of God; that is, in the house of recollection and prayer. It is in His own House that we find Him still—His Sacramental Presence: *There He is not far from every one of us.* In the holy city of a religious

community, our Lord dwells; there where reigns a spirit of regularity and recollectedness, and where that religion is found which is: *clean and undefiled before God and the Father:—its members keeping themselves unspotted from this world.*—But Jesus will not stay where relaxation and dissipation find entrance:—can it be that He is not in every company called by His Name? Alas! it may be so. *If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come into him, and make Our Abode with him.*

COLLOQUY.

O Good Jesus, how sublime a lesson is taught me by the mystery of the Finding in the Temple. Thou wouldst teach the pious soul to raise itself above the ties of nature: *and mind the things which are above, not the things which are upon the earth,*—Thou wouldst have me to avoid all that, which would break the silence of the Temple wherein Thou dwellest; or lessen the recollection which ensures Thy remaining there. Am I a temple worthy of Thee? can I not make it more so? Let me seek and find Thee as Thy blessed Mother did; and know that it is Thou Who art instructing me, by Thy holy doctrine and example.

RESOLUTION.

Courageously to uproot any attachment to creatures, which may be displeasing to our Lord.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Whosoever shall do the Will of My Father, That is in Heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.

PRAYER

Our Father and Hail Mary.

Sixth of February.

How to retain Jesus.

Mary kept all these words in her heart.—S. Luke ii.

I. Prelude.

We may imagine the happiness experienced by Mary and Joseph in finding again the Holy Child Jesus.

II. Prelude.

Give us the grace, O Lord, to learn from our Mother and Thine how, having again found Thee, we may keep Thee with us.

I. Point.

We may retain Jesus, by preserving in ourselves His grace and His love.

Would we have Jesus to dwell always in us and with us? The answer rests with ourselves: having found Him we must diligently strive to do all we can to keep Him. We must be courageous and ready to suffer: our difficulty here arises not from any wish on the part of our Divine Spouse to leave us, for He loves our souls, and would desire to remain; but His enemies and ours are in league together to take his place; the world,—the flesh,—human passion,—join in concert, to effect the displacement of our Lord, and to invade our heart. In these spiritual combats the weak and cowardly soul betrays its Master, and yields to the enemy, who immediately begins to exercise his tyrannical power;—but the faithful soul acts differently: *I found Him Whom*

my soul loveth: I held Him: and I will not let Him go. Though hell should lift itself up against me, and spread its snares for me, though my passions arise within me, my heart belongs to Jesus:—He shall ever reign therein; never will I forsake Him; nothing shall ever separate me from His love. Are these our words? is this our resolve? Have we courage enough to fight thus spiritedly? Or are we of the number of those who yield to the first assault of the foe? Let us be strong in the love of Jesus, asking Him to fortify us for every conflict.

II. Point.

To retain Jesus, we must be watchful.

Let us consider, that in the second place, in order to keep our Lord with us, we must make strong and vigorous resolutions, behind which to guard and defend ourselves from the assaults and illusions of the spirits of darkness: and that we may be firmly established in virtue. If the soul be strengthened also by a certain belief concerning the things of eternity, and lean upon these holy considerations, it will become invincible: abiding amid the stormy or insidious attacks of the enemy, unshaken as a rock. If sensuality, or pride, or some other passion assail, we must cling more confidingly to our Saviour; and keep the promises we have made, to remain ever faithful to Him. Do we thus act? Do we have recourse to Him, our Strength? and renew in ourselves a spirit of Faith? or are we cast down at the sight of our enemy? The words of the Psalmist should encourage us: *None of them that trust in the Lord shall offend.*

COLLOQUY.

O Jesus, with all my heart and soul, I repeat the words of the Spouse in the Canticles: *I have found Him Whom my soul loveth; I will not let Him go.* I desire never to leave Thee; I would renounce therefore all that might, in me, displease Thee. Defend Thy Abode against all the foes who would rob me of my dearest Treasure—that is—Thyself. Strengthened by Thy Divine Presence, I have a good hope that I shall be victorious when assailed; may I be faithfully Thine unto death, that I may obtain a crown of life.

RESOLUTION.

To think often of the promises I have made to Jesus, of being entirely His for ever.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Seventh of February.

Jesus amongst the Doctors.

JESUS was sitting in the midst of the doctors; hearing them and asking them questions: And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and answers.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the assembly of the doctors, in the midst of whom Jesus was sitting.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Master, Eternal Truth, Who didst humble Thyself to become a Learner, communicate to us somewhat of this deep humility, that we may be teachable and submissive to those to whom Thou hast given authority to govern and instruct.

I. POINT.

The wisdom of the silence of Jesus.

Jesus placed Himself amongst the learners; He, Who in reality was the Master of doctors: *In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* He now listens respectfully to the interpreters of the Law; what can they say that he did not know before? and far more perfectly than they? Nothing without doubt; but His silence and attention, in listening to them, says very much; and teaches an important lesson. We learn from Jesus that, however enlightened we may be, the highest use to make of our enlightenment is to recognise the authority of the Pastors of the Church, to whom have been confided the keys of divine knowledge; and to be amongst the most willing to receive instructions from those to whose care we have been committed by the Good Shepherd. God loves the least degree of obedience and submission, on our part, better than the greatest services we could oblige ourselves to render Him. Thy example, O Saviour, should cause us to feel deeply the force of Thy own words: *He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.* We should desire to receive respectfully and yieldingly the teaching of Thy Ministers,

and to follow, in all simplicity, the counsels of the spiritual guides Thou hast given us; so that under their direction, we may advance in all the virtues of our holy estate.

II. Point.

The modest demeanour, and the wisdom of the words of Jesus, caused the doctors to listen to Him with astonished attention.

If the silence of the Heavenly Teacher shows us how to hear instruction with humility, the wisdom with which He spoke affords us an equally valuable lesson. In questioning the doctors, He asked about matters of which He was not ignorant. He thereby taught us another lesson of humility; and that we should, by a good example, edify those around us. We are told in the holy Gospel, of the good results of this manifestation, on the part of Jesus, of the virtue of unobtrusiveness. This, together with the wisdom with which He spoke, made an impression upon the whole assembly of doctors, so that they listened with interest and wonder to His words. Thus, in our intercourse with others, we should endeavour, by uniting modesty with wisdom and gravity, to gain souls for God; in this exercise of true charity, which presupposes abnegation of self, and a desire for His glory, we should cast our eyes on Jesus in the midst of the doctors; and beg Him to inspire us with the same manner of devotedness.

Colloquy.

How good and lovable Thou art, O Child Jesus! as I see Thee in the Temple, where Thou didst begin to allow that divine wisdom to appear, of which Thou art the eternal Source. If I have to instruct and counsel others,

do Thou first teach me; and may I copy Thy humility,—prudence,—and modesty. When taught by Thy representatives, may I be docile and obedient.

RESOLUTION.

To keep silence interiorly, so that I may hear the words of the Heavenly Teacher.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

PRAYER.

Our Father and Hail Mary.

Eighth of February.

Jesus occupied in the service of His Heavenly Father.

And His Mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing: And JESUS said: how is it that you sought Me? did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the courts of the Temple.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant to us a right understanding, O Lord, of the answer made by Jesus: *I must be about My Father's business.*

I. POINT.

The service of God is our first duty.

Jesus, by the reply which He gave to His holy Mother, would have us to understand, that the end for which man has been created, is to serve and glorify the Creator. This all important fact, bound up as it is with our eternal interests, must never be forgotten by one bearing the name of Christian. This is proved by our Lord Jesus Christ, when He said, as the Head of the human race: *I must be about My Father's business:* hence we see clearly, that it is not simply fitting, and right, and just, that God should be the one Object of our life's devotion, but it is of absolute necessity that we—as creatures of His Hand—as Christians—and as religious persons, should consecrate our powers to promote His glory; by doing the work He has marked out for each one of us. Talents—riches—rank—influence, or it may be, their very contraries, must all be utilised in the service of our Father: *Who divides His gifts to every one according as He wills:* this one only thing is required of each, that he be wholly occupied, as Jesus was, in work for God.

II. POINT.

What are we doing to prove that the service of God is the end of our existence?

Are we, each one, in the practice of saying often to ourselves: *I must be about my Father's business?* If we come from God, by our creation, and belong to Him, by our dedication to Him, is there room for a single doubt that we are fulfilling only our plainest duty if we spend every moment of our lives, in actual service for Him?—Jesus did this;

—and He did this in a perfect manner. We must do our best to imitate Him; and then, after all, when we have done the things that are commanded us, we can but exclaim, in all humility, and sincerity: *We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which we ought to do.* Are we sure that we are faithfully using for God, and God alone, our every faculty,—our every power,—our soul,—our body,—our heart,—our mind,—our senses,—our gifts of nature and of grace? Here we have ample scope for self-examination, which we would do well to make, at the Feet of the Child Jesus in the Temple.

Colloquy.

Thou art so good, O my God, in thus bringing to my remembrance the zeal of Thy Son for Thy glory; it is also for this sublime end that Thou hast made me what I am. I have much to be sorry for in that I have so neglected my plain duty towards thee; and acquitted myself so ill in Thy service. I desire to make amends for my blameworthy failures, by not using my time better. I belong entirely to Thee; I am Thy servant: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*

Resolution.

To do all that I ought to do in a spirit of faith and love.

Thought for the Day.

I must be about my Father's business.

Prayer.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FESTIVALS.

Saint Andrew.

The fervent zeal of Saint Andrew, and his love for the Cross.

The next day again, John stood and two of his diciples: and beholding JESUS *walking, he saith: Behold the Lamb of God: And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed* JESUS: *And Andrew was one of the two: He findeth first his brother Simon; and brought him to* JESUS.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us picture to ourselves Saint Andrew, at the moment when he exclaimed, at the sight of the Cross on which he was to die, *O good Cross, so many years desired, and now at length granted to my longing soul.*

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour Jesus, make us to participate in the love of Saint Andrew for the Cross.

I. POINT.

Jesus detained Saint Andrew and his fellow-disciple, until towards the evening of the day on which they first saw

Him. The zeal of Andrew, in bringing his brother Peter to Jesus.

Andrew saw where He abode, and stayed with Him that day. Who could describe that first interview between Jesus and His first Disciple!—how rapidly the moments must have passed.—Let those who fear to follow Jesus, who will not take the trouble to become recollected and to talk with Him, let such *Come and see* if it is not a thousand times more pleasing to speak with Him and listen to His words, than to take part in the most interesting conversation on worldly matters. O Jesus, keep Thou our hearts near to Thy Sacred Heart; favour us with an interview, as Thou didst favour Saint Andrew; that enkindled with the fire of Thy charity, as he was, we may share in his zeal, and in his desire of winning souls for Thee. When Saint Andrew left Jesus, he found his brother, and said to him: *We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.* Let us observe here, the faith of this Apostle,—his zeal, and his eager desire to bring other disciples to his Master: he hastened to communicate to them the happiness he had himself discovered. It was growing late, the paschal solemnity was about to begin; but the new and zealous Disciple, doubtless hoped his Master would approve of his conduct and excuse his importunity; so, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, he brought his brother at once before our Lord's notice. Let us not defer until to-morrow, that which the movements of grace urge us to do to-day; for we may be running the risk of missing an interview with Jesus; or an opportunity of doing something for Him. We should lead others to Him; "and we know not," as Bossuet says, "whom we are leading"; it may be some chosen soul, who is to be brought to God by our instrumentality; Saint Andrew

little dreamed that his own brother was that Rock on which our Lord Jesus Christ would build His Church, and that to him were to be so shortly given the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

II. POINT.

The love of Saint Andrew for the Cross.

When Saint Andrew became the Disciple of Jesus Christ, he took the Cross for his portion. He had already been well instructed, by that lover of penance, Saint John-the-Baptist; and now the teaching and example of our Lord strengthened in him that desire which met with its accomplishment in his life of toil, and his martyr's death. We, too, should love the Cross, and carry it manfully all the days of our life; we should love it, because Jesus loved it so much; and because of the example of Saint Andrew, who, on perceiving it, prostrated himself—adored it—and burst forth into transports of delight: *With confidence and great joy I come to thee: And do thou, in like manner, rejoice and be glad at receiving a disciple of Him Who hung on thee.* If we love the Cross during life, in death we shall cling to it, in heart and soul; and pressing it to our dying lips, say with confidence: *O good Cross.*

COLLOQUY.

O Adorable Cross, most precious Cross, reign ever in my heart! I would desire thee,—love thee,—seek thee,—as the glorious Apostle did, whose Festival we keep to-day. O good Cross! in all my trials, and humiliations, and sufferings, I will search for consolation only in Jesus crucified. Near thee, I will contemplate Jesus;—by thee, I will [illegible] to Jesus;—in thy arms I will remain united to Jesus.

RESOLUTION.

The sight of the Cross shall ever be a means of raising my soul to Jesus crucified.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Saint Francis Xavier.

The zeal of Thy House hath eaten Me up.—PS. LXVIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us look at Saint Francis Xavier, as he crossed the seas, and traversed the Indies: his Crucifix in his hand, he announced the Gospel to the infidels.

II. PRELUDE.

O great Saint, who for love of Jesus Christ, didst give thyself up to most ardous labour, obtain for us that we may participate in thy zeal for the service of God.

I. POINT.

The great zeal of Saint Francis Xavier for the salvation of sinners.

This illustrious Saint, whose memory the Church

solemnises to-day, affords to us an example of every virtue; but particularly that of zeal for saving souls.—It is difficult to estimate what this particular excellence made him undertake, during his apostolate in France, Italy, Portugal, the East Indies and Japan. He had no other desire than that of extending everywhere the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. He loved souls so intensely, that after having laboured all the day in instructing them, and pointing out to them the way of salvation, he consecrated the greater part of the night to soliciting for them divine favours, and the benediction of Heaven. What can we think of ourselves, when we compare our zeal with his? What resemblance is there between his generosity and ours? We are not, it is true, destined for so glorious a work as his was, nevertheless, if our zeal were as active, and at the same time as religious as that of this holy Apostle of Jesus, how many hearts might we yet gain for Him. May he intercede for us and win for us a love for God, and charity towards our neighbour like to his own.

II. POINT.

The zeal of Saint Francis Xavier was accompanied by other great virtues.

To render himself worthy of his sublime vocation, this Saint practised the virtues of penance and of mortification in a degree quite heroic; nothing appeared to be beyond his strength; called thither by holy obedience, he flew to effect the spiritual conquest of the Indian nations; and when he saw in spirit the labours and crosses awaiting him in this exercise of his ministry, he cried out, in an ecstasy of love: "Still more, O Lord, still more". How his example in this respect condemns our cowardice. And not less to be admired are his humility and his poverty. Honoured

as he was by kings and chiefs of the people, and regarded as an ambassador from the Most High, he looked upon himself as a vile creature,—a worm of the earth,—a poor sinner,—he liked better to beg his daily bread than to sit at the table of the wealthy, and apostolic Nuncio though he was, it was his custom to lodge in the hospitals, where he performed the meanest offices for the sick. Whilst we read with astonishment the recital of his heroic practice of exalted virtue, let us not limit our admiration to mere sentiment; but instead of allowing it to remain sterile and fruitless, strive to unite to it close imitation;—feeling sure that God will bless also our devotedness to His cause.

Colloquy.

Thou, O Jesus, hast recompensed so liberally the goodness of Thy servant, Saint Francis Xavier;—I beseech Thee to re-awaken his spirit in Thy Ministers, and in all those who are associated together, to work for the salvation of souls, so that they may enlighten the world by their shining virtues; and draw down upon it the graces of conversion and sanctification. Lively faith—strong zeal—and fervent, humble piety—render a servant of God powerful in his intercessions, and active labours for the souls of others. *The continual prayer of a just man availeth much.*

Resolution.

To pray for holy zeal, and to turn it in the first place against myself, in order to overcome all obstacles to my advancement in solid virtue.

Thought for the Day.

May we venerate his glorious merits; and follow the example of his virtues.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. —CANT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves, the Ever-blessed Trinity, contemplating with Divine Love, the Immaculate Virgin Mary :—she becomes an object of admiration to the Angels.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant, O Lord, that in worthily honouring the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, we may esteem most highly the excellence of Thy gifts to her.

I. POINT.

The first prerogative of Mary was this :—she was conceived without sin.

As the lily among the thorns, so is my beloved amongst the daughters of Adam. Such was Mary in her Conception. Although she came of a sinful race she was preserved, by an unparalleled miracle, from the corruption of nature, which is common to us all ; for we all are born in a state

of original sin. Mary was that flower of benediction which bloomed on a withered stem. Among the human race, even the most perfect have to mourn over the inherited effects of Adam's fall; but Mary could present herself before her God, as a being free from all stain of sin; with a body and soul pure—unsullied—from the first moment of her existence. What an incomparable privilege:—what a lovely reflection of the unspeakable beauty of God's perfection! This signal favour forms the glory of Mary,—the praise of the Church,—the theme of her hymns of gladness to the Adorable Trinity, Who have thus made our Lady to be a Vessel of Honour, and Cause of our Joy. To-day it seems as if we must ceaselessly repeat the words of the Canticles: *Thou art all fair, O beloved Mother, and there is not a spot in thee.* And at the same time we shall thus be praising God for having bestowed on us a grace resembling somewhat, though indeed faintly, that which Mary received in all its plenitude. In entering Religion, to us was extended a preservative grace—in being separated from the world, its dangerous snares may be avoided; and a protecting grace—for in this sacred asylum, the virtues of innocence and purity are sheltered from the blasts of evil. Are we, like our dear Mother, becoming more and more worthy of these our privileges? or, after partaking of them, are we allowing our minds to be too much occupied with—too much drawn back to—the world? Are we re-opening our hearts to those earthly pleasures, which we have once renounced? Preserve Thine own heritage, Lord, and grant that, out of gratitude for the favours bestowed on Mary, and on us, her true children, we may follow as closely as possible, the example of her pure and holy life.

II. Point.

The second prerogative of Mary, granted to her in her Conception, was this: she was confirmed in grace by an abundance of heavenly gifts.

The soul of Mary was filled with eminent grace, which surpassed all that was given to Angels or to men; it was adorned with pureness so rare, that while the purity of God excelled it, it excelled that of all other created beings.—The Blessed Virgin possessed the use of reason perfectly, and was enlightened by the clear light of faith: in fine, she was confirmed in grace; so that from the very first moment of her existence until the last instant of her life, she did not commit the slightest fault. O Mary, sacred Tabernacle, holy Temple of the Living God; how beautiful thou wast—thou art! *there was not a spot in thee.* This is what God did in favour of the Mother of Jesus.—And what can we do for her to-day, that could please her better, than to begin to render ourselves more worthy of being the temples of her Celestial Spouse? so that we may confidently look up to her, and ask her to obtain for us, during the Octave of this her Festival, at least some share in those special graces which she received, as the beloved Daughter of the Heavenly Father.

Colloquy.

O holy and most chaste Virgin, how my heart rejoices at the thought of thy Immaculate Conception! For this, I bless and praise the Adorable Trinity; in thee I see the masterpiece of creation, the most perfect work of the Creator, Who by the foreseen Death of His own Son, didst preserve her pure from all sin. O my Mother,—the beloved of God,—and the hope of mankind,—obtain for

me, from Jesus, pardon for all my unfaithfulness, since I have been admitted into thy service. My Mother, give me thy blessing.

RESOLUTION.

To be watchful over myself, in order to avoid the smallest faults, and to correspond more faithfully to the graces God has bestowed upon me.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Thy Conception, O Virgin Mother of God, was the herald of joy to the whole world.

PRAYER.

O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception.

Saint Thomas.

In the confession of Faith made by Saint Thomas, we find assurance, instruction and consolation.

Peace be to you: Then He saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My Hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My Side; and be not faithless, but believing: Thomas answered and said to Him: My Lord and my God. —S. JOHN XX.

I PRELUDE.

Let us consider the wonder and joy which must have penetrated the heart of Saint Thomas, as he listened to his Master's words.

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus, grant that the more we know of Thy mercy and goodness towards us, the more we may love Thee.

I. POINT.

We find assurance and instruction for ourselves, in the quickened faith of Saint Thomas.

The witness borne by the ten Apostles and other Disciples that they had seen their Risen Lord, had failed to convince the unbelieving Thomas; and he said: *Except I shall see in His Hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His Side, I will not believe.* We are inclined to exclaim: What incredulity, and what temerity! A mortal man speaks as if he could overrule the ways of God, and lay down a law of action as a condition of his faith! But our Lord, in His boundless wisdom and goodness, condescended to the wishes of His faithless Disciple. The Good Master would not leave him in his state of perplexity, and so granted his incautiously expressed desires. In order to uphold those whose belief in Him should be tried in after ages, He made use of this opportunity to prove the reality of His Resurrection, and to call forth our veneration for those Sacred Wounds; that we too, by faith, may touch them; and banishing, like Saint Thomas, all doubtfulness, exclaim adoringly: *My Lord, and my God.* This should teach us that with God nothing is impossible, as Saint Thomas was taught by Jesus, when He repeated in his presence the miracle of His entrance into the place where they were assembled; *the doors being shut.* All praise be given to the Humanity of our Crucified Lord Jesus Christ, as we gaze

upon It to-day; encircled with the mystic glory of the Resurrection.

II. POINT.

We find consolation for ourselves in the confession of Saint Thomas.

Then the Lord said to him: *Put in thy finger hither and see My Hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My Side, and be not faithless, but believing:* come, My son, draw near; convince yourself of the truth of My Resurrection; convince yourself, by the exercise of your own senses, that this Body is the Same that suffered on the Cross.—Who can fathom the wondrous effects produced in the mind of His Apostle at that moment, by the words of the Saviour? Then did he indeed recognise His Beloved Master,—His power,—His greatness,—His gentleness,—His goodness. We see Saint Thomas at His Feet, full of regret and sorrow,—confidence and love;—in after years the remembrance of that hour will strengthen him for his apostolic labours; for his conquests in the regions of paganism; and lastly for his martyr's death—whereby he bore witness to his fidelity; a martyrdom which was but an extension of that first confession of his faith: *My Lord and my God.* We beseech of Thee, Who art our Lord and our God, to grant us the grace of participating in Saint Thomas's zeal and confidence; so that we too may prove ourselves worthy to see Thee—O Jesus—Face to face;—to gaze upon those glorious Wounds,—and hear those gracious words: *Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.*

RESOLUTION.

I will go to Jesus with entire confidence, however imperfect and weak I feel myself to be;—and looking upon

His Sacred Wounds, repeat: *Thou art my Lord and my God.*

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Believing, you shall have life in My Name.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Saint Stephen; the proto-Martyr.

His love for Jesus Christ.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not.—S. MATT. XXIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the joy with which Saint Stephen offered himself, as the first victim sacrificed to the glory of his Divine Master.

II. PRELUDE.

O happy Disciple of Jesus, who hadst the honour and the happiness of being the first to shed thy blood for Him, obtain for us that we may love Him as thou didst.

I. POINT.

The characteristics most observable in Saint Stephen: zeal and love.

Of all the Faithful, it was Saint Stephen who was chosen to set the example of giving one's life for the confession of Jesus Christ. We can judge of his love by the greatness,—the generosity of his sacrifice,—and the circumstances of his death. In the same year as that of the Death, and Ascension to Heaven of our Saviour, Stephen, without any succour, save his ardent faith, his fidelity, and love for his Divine Master, defended His Divinity. Fearlessly he preached the Gospel,—he confounded the doctors of the Law,—and demonstrated the religion of Jesus Christ by proofs taken from the Sacred Scriptures. Hatred and fury armed themselves against him—but in vain: nothing could stay his energy, or diminish his zeal: *Full of grace and fortitude, he did great wonders and signs among the people;* it was these, and other miracles performed by the Apostles, which confirmed the faith of that army of Martyrs, who afterwards imitated the example of the Saint of to-day. Our Lord had ascended to Heaven a few months before; and now began that procession of Saints, who were to march beneath blood-red banners, after Him. Saint Stephen proclaimed that He Whom the people had seen expire on the Cross, was the Son of God:—and he reproached the synagogue with His betrayal and murder. They threaten him with death; he sees the same people, whose hands had been dyed with the Blood of Jesus Christ, now gathering stones wherewith to shed his own. Can we not well imagine the delight with which he perceived that his turn had already come, to give his life for Him Who had suffered death on yonder Hill of Calvary?

II. POINT.

The charity of Saint Stephen; he prayed for those who stoned him.

If the love of Saint Stephen was evidenced by the sacrifice of his life, it appears again in the charity with which he forgave his murderers, and offered himself as a victim; so that he might obtain the salvation of his brethren, according to the example of Jesus Christ. Illustrious Martyr!—it had been already much, to have suffered so cruel and unjust a death with patience; but for thy heroic charity, this was not enough;—thou must needs pray for those who stoned thee; thou didst ask of God to enlighten them,—to convert them,—to bestow on them His highest graces, and the gift of eternal life. As we contemplate this scene, let us ask ourselves how we observe the law of charity; especially where it touches upon the pardon of offences. O God, how powerful is Thy grace in a pure and generous heart;—in that of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Has Thy faithful servant, Saint Stephen, many imitators amongst us? What is it which in ourselves paralyses Thy grace? Why does it not produce in us the same effects as in the holy Deacon, who was thereby so filled with charity? With what rapturous joy must he have greeted his persecutors' threats; death is at hand—Heaven opens before him: *and he sees the Son of Man standing on the right Hand of God:* waiting to crown the first Christian Martyr. Whilst they stoned him as a blasphemer, the heavenly Hosts were watching with admiration the faithful and courageous young Saint. *Lord Jesus,* he cried, *receive my spirit:*—then kneeling down, he prayed that prayer of purest charity: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Its answer came, in the conversion of Saint Paul, before another year had passed away; while doubtless

many others owed their salvation to the dying petition of Saint Stephen.

COLLOQUY.

O glorious Martyr, thou didst brave the hatred, and the fury of a people who had crucified the Just One, and who would now cruelly take thy life on account of thy fidelity to Him; as thou didst intercede for sinners with thy latest breath, so do thou now pray for me, that I too may, under every circumstance, be faithful to Jesus and His holy Church.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Saint John the Evangelist.

He that loveth cleanliness of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the King for his Friend.—PROV. XXII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us enter in spirit into the Cenacle, and there see Saint John, reposing on the Bosom of his Divine Master.

II. PRELUDE.

Beloved Apostle of Jesus, obtain for us the grace of purity of heart, that we may be the beloved of Jesus also.

I. POINT.

Our Lord's love for Saint John.

Although our Adorable Saviour loved all the Apostles with brotherly tenderness, He had for Saint John a particular affection;—and of this He gave various proofs. To him were confided divine secrets;—we see him, at the Last Supper, listening to the beating of the Sacred Heart; at that moment, so full of love for us all, for whom It was about to be pierced. Well may we envy him. At the Feet of Jesus, we find the Magdalene—our place as sinners; but the virgin Disciple, so pure, so confiding, leans upon His Breast; thence he draws forth those treasures of grace and love,—of knowledge and wisdom,—which form the characteristics of this Apostle. "The other Evangelists," says Saint Augustine, "remained with Jesus Christ on earth, and speak only of His Life here;—but Saint John mounts, as an eagle, up to Heaven itself, and declares to us the co-eternal Existence of the Son with the Father:"—the revelations made to him by Him Who is Alpha and Omega, *the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.* Let us rejoice in the happiness of this privileged Saint; may he teach us how to find entrance into the Heart of Jesus, and if it may be so, in receiving Holy Communion, to lean as he did upon Jesu's Breast. If we follow our Lord to Calvary, we find Him speaking to Saint John, of His holy Mother, from the Cross:—*Son, behold thy Mother!* This most sacred, most solemn testament was made in favour of him who was henceforth to fill the place of Mary's Son.—What graces, what blessings must have accompanied this transfer! may Saint John obtain for us his own true love for Jesus, and Mary the Queen of Virgins.

II. POINT.

The reason of Jesus' especial affection for Saint John.

Saint Augustine gives three principal motives for the great love our Lord manifested for this Apostle. He was distinguished for his gentleness; and He, Who is entitled the Prince of Peace, loves those in whom He discovers a peaceable and gentle disposition, and a heart inclined to show kindness.—Saint John had the advantage of leading a life of chastity; this virtue rendered him peculiarly dear to the Heavenly Spouse, Who takes pleasure in gathering to Himself the lilies: *he had the King for his Friend.* And then again the love of Saint John for Jesus was so ardent,—so constant,—so invincible;—he remained faithful when others fled through fear, and abandoned their Master. What a spirit of charity breathes in his writings; how frequently he recommends to us the love of God, and our neighbour.—How are we profitting by his example and his teaching? Are we loving our Lord as he did? Ought we not to do so, since He has attached us to Himself in an especial manner? Are we not consecrated to Him, Who is the Bridegroom of virgin Souls? has He not destined us to extend His Kingdom, and to gain hearts for Him? Should we not by our gentleness prove that *His yoke is sweet, and His burden light.* O Jesus, grant to us, that we may be worthy to participate in the privileges of Thy beloved Disciple: we ask this by Thy merits, and his intercession.

COLLOQUY.

Divine Saviour, Who notwithstanding my unworthiness, hast, by my vocation, associated me with Saint John in his happy privileges, grant that I may imitate his courage,—

gentleness,—charity,—and purity; and hereafter see the Throne of God and of the Lamb, and worship before Thy Face for ever.

RESOLUTION.

I will examine my words, my manner, my thoughts and sentiments, to see where I can practise charity,—gentleness,—and modesty—in a higher degree.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

The pure in heart will have the King for their Friend.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

The Holy Innocents.

God tries the just.

Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the Wise Men, was exceedingly angry, and sending killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof: from two years old and under.—S. MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

We see Jesus, Mary, and Joseph flying into Egypt, to obey the command brought to them by the Angel.

II. PRELUDE.

O Divine Infant, teach us, by this Mystery, to regard

persecutions and afflictions as trials, which will contribute to our sanctification, and our eternal glory.

I. POINT.

The just must have their part in the persecutions and sufferings endured by Jesus Christ.

The Angel said to Joseph: *Arise, take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt.* Wherever Jesus is found, there are found also His Cross, and the tribulations and contradictions which must accompany It. Let us notice the words of the Angel: *Arise and fly.* He would seem alarmed for the safety of the Child; as if terror had seized the Inhabitants of Heaven, before the startling intelligence had reached the earth. And wherefore this appearance of alarm, if not to prove the love and fidelity of Saint Joseph, who must have felt most anxious, on hearing of the peril in which the Mother and Child were placed.—And for himself, what a position!—an artisan—without means—finds that he is to be banished, at a moment's notice, into an unknown country; and why? because he is the putative father of Jesus, and has the charge of Him. How wonderful are the ways and the wisdom of God; how unsearchable to our poor, blind, natural understanding; but at least we can learn this lesson:—not to be astonished nor discouraged at the tribulations of the just; nor to consider them as a sign of God's displeasure. They are, on the contrary, proofs of His hidden designs of mercy and goodness; and marks of predestination to eternal happiness. It is in the hour of trial that virtues are refined,—courage exalted,—and souls become perfected: for such souls are often destined to meet with great success in their work for God here; and to fill thrones of distinctive glory in Heaven.

II. POINT.

The command brought by the Angel was a humiliation for the Mother and the Child.

For Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him. Mary could not question why she was thus to be driven out from her home, with her Son; because she had no other thought than this under every circumstance of her life: *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word.* Now she is to take part in a scene, calculated to try the faith of the most faithful. The Son of God must fly before the vengeful fury of a man:—does He fear him? does such a flight suit the dignity of the King of kings?—Certainly not, unless we judge of all this, as did the Holy Family.—We look for miracles, and a mighty deliverance out of difficulties, but let us humble our vain imaginations: God would be eternally honoured, and glorified, by the apparently humiliating retreat of Jesus before the enraged but mean foe;—by the submissiveness of Mary and Joseph; —and by the early death of those Holy Innocents, who were the first to die for Christ, their Lord. God ordained, —God permitted these alarming events, to prove to us by these humiliating circumstances, that He can turn evil into good. *The Lord humbleth and He exalteth: He will keep the Feet of His Saints.*

COLLOQUY.

O Divine Infant, for Whose Sake so many innocent Children suffered, and obtained by their baptism of blood the palm of martyrdom, give me grace to understand how excellent is the way in which Thou dost ever bestow the Cross upon Thy chosen ones. May I, O Jesus, now abide beneath Its shadow of suffering, according to Thy Will; so

that hereafter, I may follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.

RESOLUTION.

To accept, with joy and patience, all the trials and troubles which come in my way.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Now they follow the Lamb without spot, and cry without ceasing: Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

The Espousals of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph.

The Lord ruleth me; and I shall want nothing.—PSALM II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us see the Virgin Mary at the foot of the Altar in the Temple, at the moment when she accepted Saint Joseph as her Spouse;—all in her breathes forth humility, modesty, and the tranquillity of union with God.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant us grace, O Lord, to obtain from this meditation

the spirit of entire abandonment to Thy Providence, and of perfect fidelity in accomplishing Thy Divine Will.

I. POINT.

What were the designs of God in this union between our Lady and Saint Joseph?

Mary had given herself to God, when she had been but three years old; and we learn from tradition that Saint Joseph had also engaged himself to observe the vow of chastity. Nevertheless, the one and the other, being instructed concerning the Will of God in their regard, did not hesitate to contract an alliance as close, as it was holy, and pure.—God ordained in the first place by this union, to give to Mary a support and a protector; and one who would console and assist her:—secondly, to hide from men, and from the devil the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word: and thirdly to offer to married persons a perfect example of the Christian virtues to be practised in their holy estate. These designs on the part of God were not made known to Mary and Joseph; but they submitted to the commands of Divine Providence. No human reasoning opposed the simplicity of their obedience. Happy should we be, if we were more faithful in imitating their example: if we knew how to banish all that anxiety and agitation of spirit, to which the depending on our own will and judgment, so often gives rise: if we yielded up ourselves completely to the Fatherly care and guidance of our God, Who is All-good and All-wise; and desires our welfare, far more than we could possibly desire it.

II. POINT.

What were the sentiments of Mary and Joseph, in contracting this alliance?

Let us enter into the consideration of what must have been passing in the depths of Mary's heart, and in Saint Joseph's also, on the day of their Espousals; we cannot fail to admire the perfection we there discover. Mary had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, her Heavenly Spouse, regarding the high virtue and merit of him, to whom she was to be united, by the decree of God. She gave her heart and her hand to him, as she would have done to the purest of the Angels, confiding to him the precious treasure of her virginity; no doubt, nor fear, arising in her soul. Joseph on his part, received Mary from the hands of the High Priest as a sacred deposit, entrusted to him by God; and although he did not yet know, nor appreciate the perfection of all the virtues hidden within the heart of Mary, as he afterwards did, he was already full of a tender and loving respect for her which was akin to veneration. Yes, he venerated her; for her perfect modesty, and the expression of humility and of gentleness, observable on her features, indicated the presence of supernatural excellence in her heart and soul;—and the Patriarch, in his uprightness, and pure affection, perceived these divine charms in Mary with feelings of devotion, which were never to vary, save by their increase in intensity. Mary gave her confidence to Joseph, and in doing this elected him as the guardian of her purity;—thus he became the special defender of those who cherish the angelic virtue; such should invoke him and honour him, as their protector.—In the hour of need let his name be found on our lips, in union with those of Jesus and Mary.

Colloquy.

To the Blessed Virgin Mary and to Saint Joseph, I offer my homage of love and of respect on this the Day of their

Espousals: I beg of them to obtain for me the spirit of confidence in God, with entire abandonment to His Providence; and I would also ask a share of their charity and mutual esteem for one another, so that I may not have to reproach myself for any want of due respect and affection towards others.

RESOLUTION.

I will place all my confidence in God, under every circumstance of my life.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Under His Wings thou shalt trust.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Conversion of Saint Paul.

Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?—ACTS IX.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us picture to ourselves the road to Damascus by which Saul is travelling. He is suddenly thrown to the ground, by a supernatural power; and hearing the Voice of Jesus, he exclaims: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*

II. PRELUDE.

O Jesus! by Thy all-powerful grace, Thou didst triumph over this persecutor of Thy holy Name, so that he became

the Great Apostle of the Gentiles:—do Thou triumph also over our hearts by Thy grace.

I. POINT.

How great is the strength and power of the grace of Jesus Christ.

The marvellous change which took place thus suddenly in Saint Paul, who became at once so courageous and so energetic an Apostle, shows us the virtue and the force of God's grace. As soon as he, thirsting as he had been, for the blood of the Christians, heard the words from Heaven: *I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest*, he yielded to the Divine Conqueror over human passions, and cried out: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* His heart was won in that same moment; he was full of feelings of sincere repentance; and of perfect submission to the Will of Jesus. O wonderful power of grace! in an instant it casts down and raises up; it renders blind, and then enlightens;—the furious lion becomes as gentle as a lamb. Well may we inquire how it is that this same grace, which was so powerful in its effects, in a heart at enmity with God, produces not the same result in hearts that profess to belong to Him:—how is it, that, having heard also the same Voice reproaching His children for their little love and generosity, they do not yield? and give their hearts entirely to Him, as did Saint Paul? Wherefore so much delay? such frequent reservation? Wherefore do we not, at the same instant that Jesus Christ enlightens us, and persuades us to an entire conversion, say with all sincerity: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* Let us not only assure Him with our lips, that we are disposed to do whatever He demands of us:—whilst we say, *My heart is ready*, let us prove our

willingness practically: thus, like Saint Paul, shall we increase much more in strength, and do real work for God.

II. Point.

The mercy of Jesus appears in the Conversion of Saint Paul.

We may indeed, with Saint Bernard, admire the way in which God signalised His mercy, by waiting for this Conversion so patiently; and by effecting it so lovingly. He could have disposed of His enemy, and precipitated him into the eternal flames of hell. But no! He waits for him; and it is when Saul is about to execute his cruel designs against His Church, that Jesus bestows on him the grace of knowing Him. He does indeed violently overthrow him,—and in mercy blinds him;—knowing well that this treatment would be the most fitting preparation for one who was to be a vessel of election—a shining light—a Confessor, destined to carry the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles. After such an instance of mercy and of love, what heart could be wanting in confidence towards God, or fail to imitate the fidelity of this great Convert. Perhaps we have received the precious gift of our vocation, when we least merited it; when we were travelling along a road which leads from God:—can we compare our conversion or our progress to that of this Apostle?

Colloquy.

I thank Thee, O Jesus, for having given me, in the person of Saint Paul, an example of the power of Thy grace. Convert me by this same grace, so that I may daily turn more and more towards Thee. If Thou seest fit to cast me down, even to the dust, let me rise again,—prepared to do Thy

holy Will; and full of thankfulness let me hear, with the Apostle, Thy gracious words of encouragement: *Arise, it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

RESOLUTION.

From to-day I will be more faithful to grace; and promptly act as it shall direct me.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Saint Francis de Sales.

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show by a good conversation, his work in the meekness of wisdom.—S. JAMES III.

I. PRELUDE.

We may picture to ourselves this holy man, Saint Francis de Sales, who is always represented to us bearing an aspect of serenity and calmness, which accorded perfectly with the meekness of wisdom he possessed.

II. PRELUDE.

O Saint of God, by thy loving gentleness which gained so many souls to Jesus Christ, obtain for us the grace to imitate thee in the exercise of this virtue.

I. POINT.

The power of meekness over souls, which wins them to God.

Our Lord, Who chose Saint Francis de Sales to guide and direct so many persons along the path of perfection, adorned his soul with a variety of beautiful virtues; but especially with those of meekness and gentleness.—This it was, which gave so much force and unction to his words,—attracted so many benedictions,—and secured him such great success in his labours:—by his benevolence alone, he converted several thousands to the true Faith. We find this same gentle spirit running through all his writings, and that they produce in those who are conversant with them, wonderful fruits of perfection and salvation. Such is the power of meekness! it insinuates itself, like a sweet perfume, into the hearts and souls of those who are brought under its influence,—it softens them, so that grace may find entrance,—and then strengthens them to make sacrifices, far more efficaciously than could the severity of an embittered zeal. Let us earnestly desire to possess this lovable form of charity, that through our instrumentality, the cause of Jesus may triumph, even over the most obdurate hearts.

II. POINT.

The lesser virtues were practised and recommended by Saint Francis de Sales.

Great as was this Saint's horror of the smallest faults, his love for what are called little virtues was equally great. And this, not because that heroic excellence, which is observable in the most exalted of the Saints, was not conspicuous in him, for it assuredly was so; but the distinctive

feature in his character was this,—he was great, he was admirable, in the smallest things. St. Augustine remarks: "It is the highest virtue to be faithful in little things". We find the Saint of to-day watching over the least movements of his own heart: he exercised so discerning a vigilance concerning the frailties of nature in himself, that he quickly perceived the slightest imperfection. He would never voluntarily permit that any fault should tarnish the purity of his intentions, his thoughts, or his actions. None ever saw his patience ruffled, nor his anger aroused against anyone, whatever may have been the vexations and provocations, which he had to bear. In meditating on the well-known characteristic of Saint Francis de Sales, let us look at our own conduct, amidst the annoyances and contradictions from which we may have to suffer: are we gathering fruit from these, and laying up a store of little virtues which may stand us in good stead hereafter?

COLLOQUY.

When, O God, shall I, in order to render myself more pleasing to Thee, make vigorous and sustained efforts to subdue my inclinations, and the frequent risings of natural feeling? of which hastiness of temper, ungentle demeanour, unrestrained words, and an uncontrolled manner are the results. When shall I, like Saint Francis de Sales, employ the truest means of gaining souls for Thee?—by the unvarying exercise of the meekness of wisdom—by gentleness, and charity; adding to these, as he did, purity of intention in the smallest matters?—Grant that I may begin to-day to follow his example,—that my meditation on it may be fruitful,—and that the good results of it may appear in my daily life.

RESOLUTION.

I will give myself up to the practice of gentleness; and overcome the faults which are contrary to it.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

After the days of Mary's Purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried JESUS *to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.*—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us go in spirit to the Temple of Jerusalem: we see Mary—that pure Virgin—in company with the other women during the ceremony of purification.

II. PRELUDE.

Obtain for us, O Blessed Virgin, the grace to follow thy example of obedience and humility, of which thou didst give us an instance, as on this day, in the Temple.

I. POINT.

How perfect was the obedience of Mary in her Purification.

The law of purification had been made for ordinary

women; and therefore the Blessed Virgin Mary was in no way obliged to observe it: it must, indeed, have been a great humiliation for her to submit to it.—By so doing, she appeared to renounce openly her glorious privilege of being the Virgin-Mother of the Holy Child:—but the reverential love and respect she had for God, as the Author of the Law, were greater than any reasons which might have been alleged, to justify her dispensation from its observance. Her own Divine Son was her Model; He had undergone the humiliation of the rite of circumcision, and she therefore would not hesitate to accept the humiliation of submitting to the ceremony of purification. She did not fear to take part in it together with the other Jewish mothers, because she saw, that by doing so, she would be fulfilling the good pleasure of God:—it was from this point of view she looked at the Law's requirements. God knew what was passing in her thoughts; and approved her uprightness of intention. Is it thus we act?—Have the hidden virtues as much attraction for us as those that are seen and known by others? And when we have occasion to humble ourselves openly, have we, like Mary, the courage to submit to this mortification willingly?

II. Point.

The magnanimity of Mary's sacrifice in this mystery.

The Purification of the Virgin-Mother was accompanied by the oblation of her Son, which, according to the opinion of the Fathers, was the beginning of the Sacrifice of Calvary. How much that first oblation must have cost Mary! It was the mystic Sword of Sorrow, inflicting a wound on the Mother's heart; but the pain of this Sacrifice, upon which

the shadow of the Cross already fell, was lost in the respect she had for God's Will, which was that this First-born Son should be thus set apart for a life of propitiation. In offering Jesus, Mary offered her All; and listened to the prophetic assurance that: *He should be for a Sign which should be contradicted;* and that she should be a sharer in His sufferings. Is this the way in which we offer ourselves and all we have up to God? and accept whatever this sacrifice may involve, of suffering, or of sorrow? do we give to Him that which is dearest to our hearts? being ready for any present or future separation from all that we have once placed at His disposal? Have we ever withdrawn in part, or entirely, any such oblation?—O Mary, lend us thy spirit of sacrifice, and of humility; that we too may present to the Lord, to-day, something really worthy of His acceptance; in union with thy presentation of thy Son in the Temple.

Colloquy.

O Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, how generous was your obedience,—how willing,—how perfect! I render to you my homage of love, and respect, and gratitude, with which the Mystery of to-day inspires me.—My Saviour, in Thy Presentation Thou didst offer Thyself for the accomplishing of Thy Heavenly Father's Will and the salvation of the world. Mary, my Mother, how different is my obedience, —my submission to the holy law of God, from thine? On this day of sacrifice on the part of Jesus and Mary, may I find grace to make a more entire oblation of myself, for the promotion of the Heavenly Father's glory.

Resolution.

To render myself more worthy of the love of Jesus and His holy Mother, I will sacrifice those inclinations and

repugnances which hinder the fulfilment of my duties and of my rule.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I come to do Thy will, O my God.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

MEDITATIONS.

THE FIRST THURSDAYS IN EACH MONTH.

First Thursday in December.

Jesus Christ gives Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, as the Living Bread.

My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven: for the Bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.—S. JOHN VI.

I. PRELUDE.

We hear Jesus saying to us, from the depths of the Tabernacle: *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Saviour, penetrate us with an ardent zeal for Thy glory, and give us grace to work with energy in making Thee better known and loved.

I. POINT.

Our Lord's design in giving Himself to us in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Let us consider that our Lord Jesus Christ not only gave Himself for us, in His Life and in His Death, but He, by means of the Holy Eucharist still imparts His own Life to our souls, and renews its energy within us,—so that, by this reviving grace, we may devote ourselves, in living and in dying, to the increase of our own spiritual perfection, and to the salvation of other souls. As the Spouses of Jesus Christ we should continue His Life on earth: *As the Father hath sent Him, He also sends us*, to carry on the very same work, according to our ability, which God the Father gave Him to do. Therefore in Holy Communion we are fed by Him,—and with Himself—the Living Bread,—that we may be nourished, and sustained, and fitted for His immediate service; and that His Life may appear in us, as in His true disciples. How necessary is it that we should accept the invitation given by our Lord to go to Him for refreshment; lest we faint or grow weary. Let us feed constantly upon the Heavenly Food He provides for us in the wilderness of this world, so shall we, in our hearts, *be disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears* until by us *the God of gods shall be seen in Sion.*

II. POINT.

The charity of Jesus Christ towards us should be the model of our own.

Jesus Christ still descends each day from heaven to earth, to carry on the work of saving souls,—to give His Life for men,—and to preserve them unto life eternal. The Sacred Scriptures tell us that He declares: *My delights are to be with the children of men.* In the Eucharist He may be said to be under obedience still; to set us another example of this virtue. If He finds pleasure in being with us, it is

not so much because He desires to receive our homage or respect—although this is justly His due—as that He desires the fulfilment of His Father's Will: *This is the Will of the Father Who sent Me: that of all that He hath given me, I should lose nothing.*—To these words we may find the corollary: *He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life.* He descends to earth, because of the esteem He hath for souls, He attracts them by His divine charms. The Blessed Sacrament is the Live Coal, of which the Prophet says: *Behold this hath touched My lips, and thy sin shall be cleansed.* It is the Seed of divine Life, —the Bread which nourishes unto eternal Life,—the Seal of perfection, applied to the soul, to imprint on it the image of our Saviour's holiness.—Such being some of the various ways in which Jesus deals with the children of men, in the Eucharist, what value we should place on the immortal soul of each of them.

COLLOQUY.

I adore Thee, O Jesus, in the Sacrament of Thy Love, through which Thou art ever procuring the glory of the Heavenly Father, and the salvation of souls: to this Source of grace may I have recourse in all my necessities; obtaining therefrom zeal, and charity, and purity, and final perseverance.

RESOLUTION.

To offer to-day, to Jesus, all my prayers, and all my actions, for the salvation of souls.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Come to Me, and I will refresh you.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

First Thursday in January.

The Eucharist is a witness to the desire of Jesus Christ to bestow on us every blessing.

Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace. —HEBREWS IV.

I. PRELUDE.

We see our Lord Jesus Christ seated at the Last Supper with His Disciples.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Jesus, grant that we may comprehend how much Thou desirest to bestow on us all those blessings of which Thou art the Source; and that we may strive each day to make ourselves more worthy to receive them.

I. POINT.

The Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the Throne of Mercy.

All graces are contained in this single gift of the Most Holy Sacrament; for It is not something new that Jesus gives,—it is Himself; a repeated Gift, but ever the same: therefore it is that all may find in it all they need. Souls proved by temptations,—suffering from affliction,—downcast through misfortune;—timid, restless souls,—weak or afflicted, —all can approach with confidence to receive this Gift. We are inclined rather to reckon on the love of friends, on their enlightened counsel, on their guidance and example, but more than all these helps, we find prepared for our acceptance in the Holy Eucharist. From It we may obtain strength and consolation;—confidence and sympathy,—un-

failing and unbounded. How often we have to own the inefficacy of human means; the opportunity even of availing ourselves of them is often wanting; and when we seek for support, attention, compassion, or help, we meet with a refusal, or a rebuff. But in the Adorable Sacrament, Jesus is always present,—always waiting to receive—always ready to assist us. May we, who have faith to recognise Him there, *hope in the Name of the Lord and lean upon our God:* —on Him alone.

II. POINT.

How insensible we frequently are to these divine favours.

Let us take care not to merit the reproach addressed by Saint John-the-Baptist to the Jews: *There hath stood One in the midst of you, whom you know not.* If we know Him, why do we act as if we did not? as if we failed to recognise—to acknowledge, the universal benediction of the Presence of Jesus in His Church. We even, who receive our Eucharistic Lord, who hold in our hearts Him Whom the Heavens cannot contain,—we act thus, to whom He, in giving Himself, gives all: His Holy Humanity, with His merits,—His Divinity, with the treasures of His wisdom, His power, and infinite goodness.—He puts no bounds to His desires of enriching us; but we ourselves raise obstacles; His Hands are full of gifts, and we are so insensible to His liberality, that if we do not actually refuse them, we accept them only in part. We narrow our hearts, and our love for Jesus, and our desires after sanctity are narrowed also. Do we pretend to love Him at all? Is it not mere self-interest that brings us to His Feet? Where is our gratitude?—We do well to humble ourselves, and to bathe those dear Feet with tears of contrition; to offer acts of reparation to con-

sole His Sacred Heart, as we beg Him to make our hearts like unto It.

COLLOQUY.

Deign to receive, O Jesus, my most humble and most fervent thanksgiving, for the infinite love Thou bearest me, especially in Thy desire to unite me to Thyself, in Holy Communion. I ask pardon for having corresponded so little to the grace bestowed on me, through Thy exceeding goodness; and I beseech Thee to enlarge my heart with an ever increasing desire for Holy Communion, and to make me triumph over all that opposes the reign of Thy love in my soul.

RESOLUTION.

To prepare more carefully for the reception of Jesus into my heart.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Let us go therefore with confidence to the Throne of Grace.

PRAYER.

O Loving Jesus.

First Thursday in February.

Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, exemplifies the supernatural Life.

How lovely are Thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts.—PSALM LXXXIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves Jesus, hidden in our Taber-

nacles; we are alone with Him, to receive His valuable instructions.

II. PRELUDE.

Divine Jesus, we beseech Thee, to make us sharers of Thy hidden Life, of which Thou dost give us so wonderful an example in the Sacrament of the Altar.

I. POINT.

Jesus in the Tabernacle is alone.

We may, in studying the Heart of Jesus, form a just idea of the grandeur, and the beauty, the so-called happiness, and the vanity of the world. In the narrow Ciborium in which It is enclosed, the Sacred Heart enjoys a happiness most perfect; how different from that which the world esteems, —and which the love of self makes to appear necessary to us. Jesus lives in absolute isolation from all earthly enjoyment, in solitude and silence. He dwells in the Tabernacle; often with signs of poverty surrounding It, often with no one to adore Him: often too He finds Himself in the presence of His declared enemies; and has to bear with irreverence, and profanation, and insult. Nevertheless His Divine Heart loses nothing of Its infinite happiness, of Its beatitude, in the midst of solitude, contempt, and privation. Such would be our condition of happiness, if we were in reality disabused of the vanities of the world; instead of losing peace of mind when we are made to feel their loss. Attached to things of sense, we allow our happiness to depend on them. When shall we understand that our heart was not made for the false gods of this life, that seduce us; and can never give us true happiness? The true God alone can satisfy our hearts; their peace must be established in Him, so that they may be independent of all created objects. Then, and only then,

shall we be happy—free;—then we shall taste real joy, and participate in the beatitude of the Sacred Heart; and while sensible of the deprivation of terrestrial enjoyments, we shall sing the song of our deliverance from them.

II. POINT.

Happiness of the solitary soul.

One is happy—is tranquil—if freed from the restraints of human judgment; we then count that only to be true, which God sees in us: God changes not as man changes: on Him only can we depend, and if we do this, we are not dazzled by appearances; we shake off the yoke of opinion; we are united to Him Who is the Truth, and repose on His judgments. Should we be blamed,—or despised,—or forgotten,—what have we lost? We should rejoice to be considered as nothing before men, so that we may become something in the eyes of God. If steadfastly attached to the truth, we should no longer seek after vanities. O Lord, may we look unto Thee, and turn away our eyes from the deceitful pleasures, and illusive ostentation of the world,—so that we may not see them, nor cast a glance upon what is transitory and fleeting.—Happy then is the solitary soul, for it is free to love its God.

COLLOQUY.

O my Saviour, I prostrate myself at Thy Feet to offer Thee the homage of my adoration, love and gratitude, which is Thy due, for so many reasons, in the Blessed Sacrament. Enkindle in my heart the fire of Thy love, and grant that it may seek, in Thee alone, repose, and peace, and happiness.

RESOLUTION.

To keep my soul in peace, so that it may derive more fruit from Holy Communion.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

MEDITATIONS.

THE FIRST FRIDAYS IN EACH MONTH.

First Friday in December.

The Heart of Jesus is my All.

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.—S. John xiv.

I. Prelude.

Let us represent to ourselves Jesus Christ discovering to us His Divine Heart, and inviting us to come, and find therein that help, light, and consolation, which may be necessary for each individual soul.

II. Prelude.

O Adorable Heart, manifest Thyself to our hearts, so that we may cling more closely to Thee, and seek our happiness and repose in Thee alone.

I. Point.

The Heart of Jesus shall be our All, during this mortal life.

This Treasury of grace is open to us all, and the treasures

It contains we are invited to accept; so that in our poverty we may be enriched,—and in our feebleness, may be strengthened. We may obtain therefore, instruction—illumination—fortifying grace—and gentle inspirations. Whatever may be the needs of our souls, they are provided for. If we have, in following our evil inclinations, gone astray, and turned aside from the heavenward path, Jesus we find to be the Way;—and in following Him, we shall arrive happily at the end of our earthly journeying. If a thick darkness for a while deprive us of light from on high, Jesus is the Truth, which enlightens all who seek it in sincerity; and will quickly cause the dark clouds to disperse. Should our souls be languishing,—feeble,—sick,—or overwhelmed with the weight of their many infirmities, then Jesus is the Life which in communicating itself to them, fills them again with joy, and strength, and vigour. In our indigence, void of virtues and merits as we are, we may lay claim to the virtues and merits of the Sacred Heart; for Jesus has made them over to us, and we can present them to the Father of mercies, to supply for our deficiencies. When we pray, and act in Him, and by Him, all our actions are united to His; the fervour of His prayers, the purity of His love, the perfection of His works, have become, as it were, our own; we have a right in offering them to God, to ask in exchange, for all the benefits of grace and glory. What a vast subject of joy, and powerful motive of love!

II. Point.

The Heart of Jesus will be our All, during a blessed eternity.

When the ties which unite our souls to our corruptible bodies shall be broken, when Death shall rend the veil,

which now hides from us the loveliness of our Lord in glory, and shall put us in possession of the never-ending happiness which is prepared for us, then all the perfections of the Sacred Heart will be manifested. It is the Sanctuary of the Adorable Trinity;—the Furnace wherein are concentrated all the fires of Divine Love;—the Fount of love, and justice, and truth; and it is that Light which illuminates the Heavens; and sheds it brilliancy upon the Saints. The Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ is the brightest Ornament of the Celestial Gity; the Object in which the Father chiefly takes delight;—it is the Glory of the Elect:—but the Heart of the God-Man, Who sitteth upon the Throne, is the Centre of all the love, the joy, the bliss of the Redeemed; for It bears, and that for ever, the glorious Scar which recalls the triumph of the Cross. It is from this celestial Source of love, that streams of divine goodness will be poured forth upon the blessed in Paradise; and fill them with those pure pleasures, which no human tongue can express. May we then so love the Sacred Heart, and draw from It here such treasures of grace, that hereafter we may rejoice in the realisation of those heavenly delights, of which It will be the inexhaustible Source through all Eternity.

Colloquy.

I adore Thee, O Divine Heart, whence I may obtain all the treasures of grace and glory. Inflame my heart with holy love, and may I learn to seek in Thee, during this life, light and strength,—consolation and assistance,—so that in Heaven I may enjoy that unfading bliss which is reserved for those who love Thee, O my God.

Resolution.

To-day specially, to offer all my actions to the Heart of our Dear Lord.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

May the Divine Heart of Jesus inflame my heart.

PRAYER.

O Loving Jesus.

First Friday in January.

The Heart of Jesus loves us, and desires our salvation.

He loved me and delivered Himself for me.—GAL. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves upon the Altar in Heaven, the Lamb that had been slain. From His Heart proceed burning flames, consuming the Victim.

II. PRELUDE.

O Heart of Jesus, show us what it is which Thou hast done for men, and how they cease not to oppose Thee.

I. POINT.

Jesus is our Saviour.

He hath loved me and delivered Himself for me. This was the thought by which the Apostle would excite in himself love and gratitude towards his Divine Master. Let us meditate upon it; and nourish our souls with the consideration, that our Saviour loved us, even when, through sin,

we were His enemies: touched with compassion at the sight of our miseries, and the death eternal which was awaiting us, He took upon Himself the punishment we had merited; and obtained our salvation by making satisfaction for each of us. His ardent love caused Him to embrace great humiliations,—terrible torments,—and a most ignominious Death. He might have saved us by a single act of obedience, —by a single drop of His Blood;—but that which would have sufficed for the requirements of the justice of the Father, was not enough to satisfy the tenderness of His Loving Heart. He desired, not only to open Heaven and close Hell, but also, on our behalf to merit such an abundance of graces, that our eternal loss should become, as it were, a matter of greater difficulty than our salvation. His love made Him even to long, and that ardently, for the suffering which He would endure; so that, in speaking to His Apostles, He said: *And I have a Baptism, wherewith I am to be baptised: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.* What love is here! Let not our hearts remain insensible to so many proofs of the immense charity of Thy Sacred Heart; but may we strive to love Thee with the same love wherewith Thou hast loved us. Thou becamest as nothing for our sakes; may we bear humiliations for Thy sake: Thou didst suffer—Thou didst die—to save us from endless sufferings and eternal death; may we mortify ourselves,—our inclinations,—our natural tendencies, so that we may live to glorify Thee, O Lord.

II. POINT.

Jesus is the Saviour of all men.

That which Jesus has done for each of us, He has done for all mankind; there is no one in the whole world, who

may not say, with Saint Paul: *He hath loved me and delivered Himself for me.* The infinite charity of His Heart causes Him to have, for each one of His creatures, a love as strong and as tender, as if he were the only being in the world: and had it been necessary thus to secure happiness and salvation to each, He would have repeated His Passion and Death for each, in particular.—Such inexhaustible love, on the part of our God, ought indeed to touch the most hardened heart; and enflame the very coldest; but the greater number of men go their way, and do not think about it at all. The love of Jesus,—His sorrowful Death,—His unfailing benefits are effaced from their memory:—yes, they often go still farther—outrage His generosity; and trample under foot the Precious Blood, which He has shed for their redemption. By this effusion, Heaven was opened for them; but they turn aside from the path of Life and precipitate themselves into the flames of hell. Can we look upon such folly and base ingratitude, without feeling the deepest compassion towards our Saviour? can we listen unmoved to the loving complaint made by our Lord, in showing us His Sacred Heart? "Behold this Heart, Which has loved men so much, that It has spared Itself in nothing, in order to prove Its tenderness for them; and yet it receives in return, only coldness and contempt."

Colloquy.

I will render to Thee, O my Saviour, with all possible fervour, acts of adoration, love and thankfulness; and make reparation to the Divine Heart, for my own ingratitude, and that of all sinners: begging that I may be accepted as another victim, to expiate the outrages committed against It.

RESOLUTION.

To offer, to-day, all my prayers and actions to the Heart of Jesus, in the spirit of reparation.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Behold this Heart, Which has loved men so much

PRAYER.

O Loving Jesus.

First Friday in February.

In the Heart of Jesus we find the cure of our souls.

Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.—MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

We may represent to ourselves Jesus Christ, discovering to us His wounded Heart; and inviting us to come, and find in It health and strength for our souls.

II. PRELUDE.

Give us grace, O Heart of our God, to profit by Thy goodness; and to apply to ourselves Thy infinite merits.

I. POINT.

Jesus came to heal, by His Death, the wounds made in our souls by sin.

In the touching parable of the good Samaritan, is depicted

to us, though in faint outline, the intense kindness of the Divine Heart. Feeling a deep compassion for our misery, Jesus left the Throne of His glory and on His Cross He shed abroad the healing Balm of His most Precious Blood;—by its application to our wounded souls, we regain life at the price of His Death; *by His bruises we are healed.* Only the Heart of God could have been capable of such love and such tenderness; ought we not to be inspired thereby with gratitude, and with confidence? However great our ills may be, however inveterate the wounds of our souls, our Saviour can, and will, come to our rescue, and make us whole: falls most frequent, vices most deeply rooted, cannot resist the power of His grace; He cures; He restores. He blots out even the remembrance of the wrongs He has suffered at our hands, if we appeal to His Heart for the recovery of our soul's health. Why then sink under the weight of our sins, and the consequences of our evil tendencies, when help is always near? Revive our faith, O Lord, increase our hope, augment our love, and grant, that in attaching ourselves more and more to Thee, by the ties of devotion and affection, we may feel the blessed effects of Thy infinite goodness.

II. Point.

Jesus wills that we should seek from Him a remedy in all our afflictions and troubles.

The Heart of the Divine Master would not only procure the health and the life of our souls, but the tenderness of His love—His discriminating regard for our feelings, makes Him sensible of the sorrows which are inseparable from the condition of the human race. He sympathises with us in our affliction, He permits indeed these trials; by them, and through them, He draws us nearer to Himself, but He does

not ignore their bitterness; for we hear Him saying in gracious accents: *Come to Me, all you that labour; and I will refresh you.* He would pour into wounded hearts, the balm of interior consolation; fortify them by the unction of His grace; raise their drooping courage by the thought of an eternal recompense; bear the heaviest part of their burden,—and help them to carry the rest. O Heart of our Saviour, how little Thou art known and loved, even by us, when we allow ourselves to be weighed down by afflictions and weariness; instead of turning to Thee for help and refreshment. Pardon our want of confidence;—pardon our coldness, and that culpable indifference which keeps us often afar off, whilst Thou art calling us to pour forth our hearts into Thy own wounded Heart.

Colloquy.

Let me adore the Sacred Heart as the Treasure-house of all graces, and the vast Ocean of divine goodness,—I will also make known to It the diseases of my soul, and seek therein its cure; there also shall I find a remedy for all my sufferings, and consolation and assistance under every trial.

Resolution.

To go to the Heart of Jesus in all my tribulation; to submit to His Providence, and to trust firmly in Him for a final deliverance.

Thought for the Day.

The Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you.

Prayer.

O Loving Jesus.

MEDITATIONS.

THE FIRST SATURDAYS IN ADVENT.

First Saturday in Advent.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Thou art all fair, O my love; and there is not a spot in thee. —CANT. IV.

I. PRELUDE.

We can represent to ourselves the Adorable Trinity, contemplating with love the Immaculate Virgin, and pointing her out as an object of admiration to the heavenly Hosts.

II. PRELUDE.

O God, Who in preserving Mary from original sin, didst prepare a fit habitation for Thy Son, in the womb of this Immaculate Virgin, inspire us with a horror of sin; and a contempt for the vanities of the world.

I. POINT.

What we ought to think of the Immaculate Conception.

It was not permitted that our Lady should be rendered less than perfect, by the stain of sin, either original or

actual. The Everlasting King would not, that she, whom He had chosen to be His privileged Daughter, from all eternity, should be for one instant subject to the law of sin. The Word, by Whom all things were made, in creating Mary, had preserved her from it through the efficacy of His Precious Blood, by the grace of an incomparable purity; and protected her from the moment of her Conception, by the power of His Will.—The Holy Spirit would not that His Spouse should have contracted aught that might mar her spotless loveliness.—She, in the first moment of her existence, was *to crush the serpent's head*:—the effect of her Immaculate Conception was the undoing of the consequences of Eve's offence. Thus Mary, foreknown to the Adorable Trinity, appeared in all her virginal purity. By her unparalleled privileges, she ever glorified the Most High; and in becoming the joy of the Church, draws forth the best affections of our hearts, and our canticles of praise: *Thou art all fair, O Mary, there is not a spot in thee.*

II. POINT.

Our Lord has made us, in some degree, partakers of Mary's prerogatives.

In separating us from the world, by calling us to enter the religious state, God has bestowed on us preserving, protecting, and sanctifying grace; we have received from Him a new birth in the high privilege of religious Profession, our bodies, with all their capabilities,—our souls with all their faculties, have been sanctified—consecrated. At our disposal have been placed means of holiness,—oft-repeated inspirations,—unlooked-for favours. How have we used these precious advantages granted to us, as Spouses of Jesus Christ? Fed with His Sacred Flesh, the Fruit of

Life formed by the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb,—enjoying daily and familiar intercourse with Him, Who lay on her breast, and with Whom she lovingly conversed,—offering Him in Sacrifice with the Priest each day, Whom she offered to God upon the Cross,—what ought not to be our feelings, if we rightly comprehended the sublimity of these marvellous privileges? What purity of soul, and heart, and body, do they not demand! With what sanctity ought they not to be adorned! What an unsullied conscience should we not to possess! How could we commit a deliberate fault? even venial. How deep should be our regret on account of those imperfections, which escape us through human frailty.

Colloquy.

Holy Virgin, who art worthy of my highest love and admiration, thou art my hope and my support. The greatness of thy merits has raised Thee above the Angels, up to the Throne of God; thou art strong against our enemies, for thy Immaculate Conception crushed the head of the old serpent: therefore be thou my Mediatrix; so powerful,—so gentle,—so full of goodness.—Take pity on me, in my weakness; and deliver me from the snares of the enemy; and from the troubles which afflict me.

Resolution.

I will carefully keep watch over myself, in order to avoid the least fault.

Thought for the Day.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee.

Prayer.

O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception.

Second Saturday in Advent.

On the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. —CANT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

We can represent to ourselves the Adorable Trinity, contemplating with love the Immaculate Virgin, and pointing her out as an object of admiration to the heavenly Hosts.

II. PRELUDE.

O God, Who in preserving Mary from original sin, didst prepare a fit habitation for Thy Son, in the womb of this Immaculate Virgin, inspire us with a horror of sin, and a contempt for the vanities of the world.

I. POINT.

We should not only honour the Festival of the Immaculate Conception ourselves, but also promote its honour generally, as far as possible.

Mary alone, among all the daughters of Adam, like a solitary lily growing in the midst of thorns, has been exempt from original sin and its consequences. From the first moment of her Conception she was in a condition of sanctity, superior to that of all Angels and Saints; and was fitted to glorify God, in a manner more excellent and more perfect, than could any of His other creatures. How much our Lady must rejoice in her title of Immaculate Virgin;—a title which distinguishes her from all the children of our first father. This beautiful name points out her resemblance to her Divine Son, Who is the Saint of saints; the Angels,

of whom she was to be the Queen, saluted her by it; and as they regarded the wondrous way in which she was to be prepared for the mystery of her future Motherhood, they sang a new song of thanksgiving, to honour her Immaculate Conception. Year by year we now commemorate this Festival, and honour and venerate the Mother of God; as the Church recals to our minds this most excellent Mystery, this marvel of marvels. We, who are, in a peculiar manner, her children, ought to be deeply penetrated with love for this same Mystery, and do our utmost to inspire others with the same devotion.

II. POINT.

The advantages we derive from our fidelity to this devotion of the Immaculate Conception.

From the first moment of the existence of Mary, we find in her an enlightened understanding—an upright will—entirely conformed to that of God: a liberty more perfect than that of the Angels, or that of Adam, in his state of innocence;—freedom from ignorance—and the desire of earthly gratifications; her pure soul enshrined in a body, destined to be the Tabernacle of the God-Man;—a degree of sanctifying grace, and of actual graces, of so superior an order, that all her thoughts, her affections, her actions were thereby rendered holy. She, possessing no evil inclinations, was incapable of the slightest fault; she had a constant, conscious attraction towards virtue. Her union with God was unbroken,—her fidelity to grace inviolable: totally forgetful of herself, and ever preserving an intention most perfect, she referred all, without reserve or exception, to the greater glory of God. Even the secondary motive of increasing in merit, or personal sanctity, or the thought of recompense, were unknown to her.—How can we to-day contemplate the perfections of

our Mother, without being drawn to love and venerate her more and more? We think of her too as a Queen, so beautiful, so gracious,—who, when on earth, was most perfect in the eyes of her Creator. And in Heaven she dispenses His graces, which flow from her hands, like an impetuous river, to rejoice the City of God: and whereof, even in this lower world, we may be glad;—asking her to pour of its waters, some streams of grace on us. The Church assures us that she intercedes for those who devoutly honour her Immaculate Conception; let us fly to her patronage, and beg her assistance, to obtain for us those favours from her Son, which we most earnestly desire; confident in the belief that He will not refuse our requests, if offered to Him by His dear Mother and ours.

COLLOQUY.

O my God, Thou didst preserve Mary from original sin that she might be that House of Gold wherein Thy Son should dwell; I beseech Thee, by her intercession, give me grace to lead a pure and holy life; to become a true Spouse of my Celestial Bridegroom, and attain to that degree of perfection which He expects to find in me.

RESOLUTION.

Often to invoke our Lady, under the title of—Immaculate Virgin.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee.

PRAYER.

O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception.

Third Saturday in Advent.

Our Lady of Hope.

She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name JESUS; *for He shall save His people from their sins.*

I. PRELUDE.

We can represent to ourselves the Adorable Trinity, contemplating with love the Immaculate Virgin; and pointing her out as an object of admiration, to the heavenly Hosts.

II. PRELUDE.

O God, Who in preserving Mary from original sin, didst prepare a fit habitation for Thy Son, in the womb of this Immaculate Virgin, inspire us with a horror of sin, and a contempt for the vanities of the world.

I. POINT.

Mary prefigured the Church in her time of waiting for the Birth of her Son.

Mary waited longingly for the hour when the Divine Child should miraculously leave her womb; as a ray of light to gleam forth upon the world. She had asked for the Coming of the Messias with greater ardour than all the Patriarchs and Prophets. They had cried unto Heaven, with constant sighing, in order to draw down the Desire of all nations; they had said, *Who shall ascend into Heaven to bring Christ down?* but what Saint, under the old law, could appreciate, as did Mary, the infinitely precious results of the Mystery of the Birth of Jesus? As the representative of the whole Church, Mary laid before the eternal Throne

of God, all the desires of the Saints; she united within herself the faith and the ardour of these desires.—Let us enter into her feelings of longing expectation, and so be better prepared for the coming Feast of the Nativity.

II. POINT.

Mary is not only the representative, but also the type of the Church.

Mary in giving birth to the Saviour of the world, was the figure of the Church, since through Her, He is produced each day in the hearts of the faithful, to sanctify them. As Mary remained a Virgin in becoming the Mother of God, so the Church, without losing her prerogative of being the chaste Bride of Christ, brings forth children: *Who grow up in Him, Who is the Head.* The Holy Ghost was the Celestial Spouse of Mary Immaculate:—Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Bridegroom of His mystical Church. The life of Mary, before the Nativity of Jesus, was a continual prayer; she prayed for the appearance of the Light of light; for the budding forth of the Flower of Nazareth; and that the Author of salvation might come to give joy to the world. So the life of the Church is a life of prayer,—of waiting,—of expectation;—*of looking for the blessed hope, and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* As faithful children of Holy Church, let us continue in prayer, waiting for our Lord: so shall we increase in sanctity, by means of the preparation we shall be ever making for His Advent. May Mary be our protector in life, and in death our defence.

COLLOQUY.

O Mary, Who hadst the honour and the happiness of bringing into the world Him, Who was the Desire of all

nations,—may I unite with thee in thy ardent longing for the Coming of Jesus. As a true and faithful child of the Church, may I live a life of prayerful expectation, so that, when He comes again, I may speedily find myself at thy feet; to thank thee for all that thou hast done on my behalf, during this time of watching and of waiting.

RESOLUTION.

Often to ask, during this day, that I may be ready to see my God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Fourth Saturday in Advent.

On the instructions that Jesus and Mary give us, at the moment that the Divine Child appeared in the world.

And she brought forth her First-born Son.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the streets and houses of Bethlehem, and a little outside the city we see a deserted stable.

II. PRELUDE.

O Mary, thou hadst the happy privilege of being the first to contemplate the loveliness of the New-born Jesus; may we, by thy intercession, win His favour; and like Thee

pour out our hearts in adoration,—joy,—thankfulness,—and love, beside the Crib.

I. POINT.

What the Child-God taught us, at the moment of His Birth.

The time was accomplished; the appointed months had passed away since the Angel had borne back to Heaven Mary's message; *Be it done unto me according to Thy word.* The Saviour had not abhorred the Virgin's Womb; but in obedience to His Father's Will, He was now to leave the Tabernacle in which He had been hidden, and to fulfil the prophecy: *Out of thee, Bethlehem Ephrata, shall He come forth unto Me, That is to be the Ruler in Israel.* What could have appeared less probable than that Mary would be called away from her home, and become a wanderer in search of shelter, just at the time when she was *to bring forth her First-born Son?* and that the King of kings should be indebted to the very animals for His Crib? Who would have supposed that the Angels would be summoned around a manger, to adore the Creator of Heaven and earth lying therein, in helpless Infancy?—*Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?* Surely Jesus teaches us this lesson; that by doing simply the Will of the Heavenly Father in unquestioning obedience, we cannot fail to draw down upon ourselves and others the blessing of God; and to give joy to the Angels.

II. POINT.

Mary's first moments with the Holy Child, after His Birth.

Excluded from the houses in the city, Joseph and Mary were obliged to retire to a spot where the Son of Man must begin a manner of life which He, later on, again adopted:

He had not where to lay His Head. When all seemed most unprepared, like a flash of light,—like a vivid sunbeam,—He, Who had been miraculously conceived, miraculously appeared. And yet the preparations were most complete; they were perfect; for God alone had made them. Mary herself is astonished when she finds her Child on the straw; she adores Him, she lifts Him up, and presses Him to her heart; and wrapping Him with loving care in the swaddling clothes, she places Him in the Manger. The joy of the ever-blessed Mother is unspeakable. She comprehends the preparations God has made; poverty and humility are the surroundings of the New-born Infant; and they will accompany Him up to the closing scene of His career on earth. Mary gazes upon His Face:—then she sees the walls, which afford so poor a shelter to Him Who framed the world,—she sees the manger,—the straw,—the animals,—she knows that Saint Joseph is not far off; she turns her eyes again upon the Divine Child; she understands that it is for our salvation that He is reduced to such a condition, and is born amid such lowly circumstances. She begins to be our Mediatrix; He, Who had been eternally in the Bosom of the Father, now listens to the prayers of the Mother beside Him;—and does she not pray for those He came to save?

Colloquy.

In Thee, O Mary, Jesus reposed; we honour Thee as the Sanctuary of the Divinity,—the Temple of the Most High; obtain for us, from Thy Holy Child, somewhat of that profound humility,—that angelic purity,—that heavenly charity, which He found in Thee; and by which thou hast merited to become our advocate with Him. My Mother pray for me.

RESOLUTION.

To ask of Mary, repeatedly to-day, the grace to receive the Child Jesus into our hearts.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Reign over us, thou and thy Son.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Saturday in the Octave of Christmas.

Mary teaches us how to meditate on the holy words concerning Jesus, which we have heard.

Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.—LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

We see before us Mary, near the Crib, contemplating with love the Divine Child.

II. PRELUDE.

O Mary, let us contemplate thy Dear Son together with thee; so that we may have our part in the consolation and spiritual joy thou didst experience in this holy exercise.

I. POINT.

Mary gives us an example of the manner in which we ought, as religious persons, to hear the word of God.

Twice the Evangelist draws our attention to the careful ness with which our Lady gathered up the words which

had been uttered by the Angel Gabriel,—by Saint Joseph, —Saint Elizabeth,—the Priest, Zachary,—and the Shepherds. They had all spoken to her of God; of her Divine Son; therefore she laid up their words in her heart, and merited for herself the benediction promised to such as *hear the word of God and keep it.* According to a pious tradition, we are indebted to the Blessed Virgin Mother for the consoling and valuable details, which we find in the Gospel, concerning the Childhood of Jesus. How many there have been, who, wishing to learn all they could of It, have satisfied the thirst of their devout desires with that refreshing stream of memories which tell of Jesus, at Bethlehem and Nazareth. Let us treasure all the words of God,—of His Holy Church,—of the Saints,—let us meditate upon them, —repeat them for our consolation;—and thus augment our faith, our hope, and our love. With them upon our lips and in our hearts, we may greatly help others also, and confirm them in what is good; so, like Mary, we may use our experience, and our knowledge of holy things, for the benefit of others; in all charity and humility.

II. POINT.

Jesus is the subject of Mary's meditations.

It was on her Divine Son that she centred all her thoughts, —all her affections,—all her desires. That we may imitate her, the Holy Spirit tells us again, that *the Mother of Jesus kept all these things in her heart:* all the things of God, we too, should keep in our hearts.—Around the thought of Him, we should centre all our affections and desires: we should study and meditate upon Jesus Christ unceasingly. If we take pleasure in so doing, we shall pass on to the practice of those virtues, which we find in Him; and we

shall be able to say with the Apostle: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* In His doctrine—in His example, all speaks, and instructs:—all is real, is solid. Let us apply ourselves to the study of them; it will repay us a hundred-fold; it is for want of this pondering that our own progress is so imperceptible, that our works are so sterile. We are like empty vessels, when our minds are not filled with the things of God. Little effort of the understanding is needed for this highest of all studies; this acquirement is made through the affections, rather than through the intellect. With Mary, we should remain interiorly in a constant attitude of prayer; God asks of us silence, and attention to His Divine word, to His inspirations,—to the movements of His grace. If we give Him these, He will do the rest.

Colloquy.

O Mary, thou didst choose the better part: I see thee at the Feet of the Child Jesus, attentively contemplating the marvellous events connected with His Coming into the world. Let me remain near the Manger, and learn from thee, how to meditate on the things of God,—to engrave them in my heart;—so that, by them, I may increase in sanctity; and may instruct and edify others.

Resolution.

To take with Mary, the mystery of the Child Jesus contemplated by His Mother, as a subject for short meditations this day.

Thought for the Day.

Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.

Prayer.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Saturday after the Feast of the Circumcision.

The Silence of Mary.

Mary kept all these things in her heart.—LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

We represent to ourselves the Mother of Jesus beside His Crib,—in meditation.

II. PRELUDE.

O Mary, thou didst keep within thy heart the wondrous Mysteries of which thou wast the witness: give us grace to understand the value of silent prayer, upon the events which took place at Bethlehem.

I. POINT.

Silence of Mary.

Nothing excites our admiration more than this silence of the Blessed Virgin, after the accomplishment of the mysteries of the Nativity: she was silent, because she had been called to take so important a part in them; and she would not herself arrest any of the honour or regard which belonged to her Son. She received Him into her arms and adored Him as her Saviour, and her God: she listened to the Angels' song, and to the praises of the Shepherds and of the Magi. She kept a respectful silence when the old man Simeon, and the prophetess Anna spoke of Him as the Redeemer.—Might she not have poured out her heart in words of astonishment and joy? Yes, but in her position,

it was more perfect to keep silence. She might have said so much; but all lay too deep down in her heart for words: —it is better not to speak the thoughts that God Himself has hidden in our hearts, and sealed with a seal of secrecy, which we feel we may not remove, even if we could give them utterance. Let us contemplate the silence within Mary's heart, until we ourselves comprehend somewhat of the blessedness of having in our hearts a quiet cell; the silence of which is not interrupted by the intercourse we there hold with its Divine Occupant. If we know what it is to converse there with Jesus, even amid the hurry of going and coming, and the passing of events, we shall understand our dear Mother's being so absorbed in the things of God that she listened to those who spoke of Him, but said nothing of herself: in part, because she would not—in part, because she could not.

II. POINT.

Reserve and humility of Mary and Joseph.

Joseph understood the silence of his espoused Wife; he had a share in her motives: he had heard the Angels speaking to him of things surpassing human comprehension; and had seen the accomplishment of the prophecy: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son.* Neither of these holy Parents would speak of themselves; such was their reserve and their humility. They would even hide from each other, had it been possible, their respective privileges, so that no honour might be attached to their persons; but that God might be glorified and God alone. O how beautiful a trait is humility! to it entirely were Mary and Joseph indebted for that honour which, coming from God, has been recognised and offered to them, in all ages, by the Church.

What is there, what has there ever been of great or noble on this earth, which could bear comparison with the real greatness, and nobility of Joseph and Mary? who by a mutual, but unspoken consent, remained silent :—and therefore poor,—lowly,—unknown. It was hence supposed that the Divine Child was born after the manner of ordinary children. *Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* was the question raised afterwards by human reasoning; the true value of which, we learn from that put upon it by Mary and Joseph.

Colloquy.

O heart of Mary, Ark of the Covenant, that kept within thyself the secret of the Lord and pondered His words, and meditated upon the Mysteries of His Son, teach me how to keep silence in my heart, that God may also confide to me the secrets of His love, and confer on me His hidden graces.

Resolution.

To follow faithfully the interior attraction which inclines me to meditate, in the silence of prayer, on the mystery of the Childhood of Jesus.

Thought for the Day.

God is in Heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.

Prayer.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Saturday in the Octave of the Epiphany.

Mary offers the Holy Child to receive the Adoration of the Magi.

And entering into the house they found the Child, with Mary His Mother.—MATT. II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us picture to ourselves Mary, as she presented the Child to the Wise Men.

II. PRELUDE.

O Queen of Heaven, let us think of thee, directing the attention of the travellers to the Saviour: so do thou direct our thoughts to thy Divine Son in our journey through this world, by obtaining for us the grace of living in Hi Presence.

I. POINT.

Mary appears before the Magi, with the Child in her arms.

These representatives of the Gentile world had perseveringly followed the Star: *until it came and stood over where the Child was.* Then it entirely disappeared: it was eclipsed by another Star. Mary the Star of the Sea, as her name signifies, was to shine clear and bright over the ocean of this world, to guide by her light, those who are journeying across it to the heavenly Country. It has been told us, that on hearing the sounds of their arrival, Mary arose, and taking Jesus from the Crib, presented Him, near the entrance of the Cave, to the new comers: *They found the Child, with*

Mary His Mother. The Magi sought for Jesus, that they might embrace Him, and adore Him; so she placed Him in their arms, and accepted, on His behalf, the presents they had brought from their Eastern home. They interrogate her, and believe implicitly all that she tells them. She says what is necessary to confirm their faith,—there is a holy restraint in her manner, her eyes are cast down,—there is mingled modesty and dignity in her demeanour; and she relies on God for strength to perform aright, this her part, in the manifesting of Christ to the Gentiles. We may look long upon this beautiful picture of Mary, as she fulfils by anticipation, and with marvellous perfection, her functions as Mistress of the Church, the First Apostle of her Son.

II. POINT.

Mary's mission with regard to the Eastern kings.

They had not, like the Shepherds, received from the Angels a sign, by which they might recognise the Messias; but they were to find the Child with His Mother; it was she who was to make Him known to them. The Manifestation of the Redeemer, Who for so many ages had been promised, had been reserved for Mary's co-operation; and as she fulfilled her mission with promptitude and quiet joy, she entreated the Holy Spirit to enlighten, through her instrumentality, these first-fruits of the Gentile Church. He, Who had clothed Himself with her pure flesh, and was now seated upon her knee, received the adoration of the kings of the earth: they acknowledged the Presence of their King; and offered their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. As we gaze upon this scene without the walls of Bethlehem, let us ask our Lady that, when we reach the end of our journey, she will show Jesus, the blessed Fruit of her womb, to us.

COLLOQUY.

O holy Mother of God, thou who wast pre-ordained to present thy Divine Child to the Eastern kings, let the thought of thee lead me on to think of, and to know Jesus better. May I become more and more possessed by thy spirit of devotedness; so that I too may make Him loved and known in the world, and attract others to offer to Him their love and homage.

RESOLUTION.

To act in union with our holy Mother, looking to her for succour.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

They found the Child, with Mary His Mother.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

First Saturday after the Epiphany.

Mary's sorrow at the Loss of her Son.

And seeing Him, Mary and Joseph wondered: And His Mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou thus done so to us? behold Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. —S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

We observe the anxiety with which Mary and Joseph sought Jesus.

II. Prelude.

O Divine Mother, do thou teach us by thy example, with what care we should seek thy Son.

I. Point.

How great was the distress Mary felt at the loss of her Child.

We have sought Thee sorrowing. Thus the holy Mother expressed the keen grief she had endured. From her lips no selfish complaint had ever escaped; "but to-day," as Saint Bonaventure says; "her soul overflowed with anguish. To understand fully the bitterness of her loss, let us not forget that Mary loved her only Son intensely, and to be deprived of that for which we possess the greatest affection causes a proportionate grief." Whence it has been concluded that the loss of the corporeal Presence of Jesus made His Mother suffer a torment which surpassed what Martyrs have experienced in the midst of the most cruel torture. The tears of the mother of Tobias, when he set out on his journey, but feebly prefigure the tears of Mary. Most desolate Mother! she had lost the Divine Light; the life of her soul. Where had He gone? What had happened to Him? Why had He left her? Where should she seek Him? In all the sorrows of Mary we can never sympathise enough; for was there ever such a Son? was there ever such a Mother?

II. Point.

The eagerness with which the Blessed Virgin sought for Jesus.

She began to search for her lost Child without delay. What sleep could she give to her eyes, until she had found

Him again? *She went by the streets and the broad ways, saying: Have you seen Him?* In this search the Blessed Virgin discovers to us some hidden mysteries on which to meditate. She represents the Church, which in time of persecution seeks Her Celestial Spouse, Who seems to have concealed Himself from view—to be lost—as if He had abandoned Her to Her sorrows and affliction;—but He has not forgotten His promise: *Behold I am with you always.* Again, they whom God visits with spiritual desolation can turn to their Mother for sympathy and consolation; knowing that she has experienced the same trial. And such as have lost Jesus by sin, they too can go to her, as the Refuge of sinners, and she will help them to find the Saviour.—Under every such circumstance we must not lose confidence, but trust in the mercy of God, as she did; uniting to our trustfulness that diligence—that patient perseverance—which is so pleasing to Him. "A firm hope in God," says Saint Bernard, "is a sign of that generosity which obtains all from His infinite goodness;" for ours can never out-do His.

Colloquy.

With all my heart, I desire, O Mary, that by the help of thy maternal protection, I may imitate thee in the active and persevering research thou didst make, when thou hadst lost Jesus; teach me the lessons thou didst thyself learn when suffering that affliction:—may I not again lose Him through my own fault; but confide in Him so entirely, that He may never really forsake me in time, nor for eternity.

Resolution.

To seek Jesus in the hour of desolation and aridity, with confidence and fervour.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

You shall seek Me, and shall find Me: when you shall seek Me with all your heart.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Second Saturday after the Epiphany.

Mary at the Marriage-feast of Cana in Galilee.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the Mother of Jesus was there: And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus saith to Him: they have no wine. She saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.—S. JOHN II.

I. PRELUDE.

We represent to ourselves Jesus and Mary honouring with their presence the marriage-feast.

II. PRELUDE.

O good Mother, thou hast such power over the Heart of Jesus, ask of Him that He may change our cold, unloving hearts; and fill them with His grace.

I. POINT.

On this occasion, we perceive the power possessed by Mary over her Divine Son.

The Mother of Jesus is mentioned first in speaking of the invitation given, because the bride and bridegroom had not presumed, without her, to invite our Lord. Let us understand by this, that to obtain the visit from Jesus at the spiritual nuptials which we would celebrate with Him, we should ask His Mother to be present. It is indeed most suitable that so it should be, as Saint Augustine says, "since within the chaste bosom of our Lady was celebrated the most illustrious of all unions, that of the Word with our human nature". Another saint remarks, "she had the high honour of taking part in the most noble, the most wonderful alliance;—she had remained a chaste Virgin, yet was a most fruitful Vine; because, on account of her perfect purity, and profound humility, the Son of God was the blessed Fruit of her womb". Well may we believe that which this Marriage-feast in Cana proves very clearly, that it is under the auspices of Mary we shall have our part in the Heavenly Banquet to which she and Jesus invite us.

II. POINT.

The compassion of Mary; and efficacy of her prayer.

She perceived the want of wine, without being told of it; and then asked her Son to remove the anxiety of the host, of her own accord. She requested Him to perform a miracle, on an occasion which did not seem to merit it; for it was not a question of restoring to life the only son of a widow,—nor of curing a sick child, cruelly tormented, —nor of relieving some person in great necessity. No, she conjured the Almighty One to work a miracle simply to spare their entertainers the embarrassment of finding that too little wine had been provided. *They have no more wine.* Mary told Jesus this fact; she manifested no anxiety, nor

over-eagerness, the desire implied by her words sufficed. He well knew His Mother's wishes: and to make us understand the power they exercise over His Loving Heart, He anticipated the period when He would begin to perform miracles; and complied with her request. Who can doubt that Jesus listens to the intercessions of the Queen of Heaven? Let us never forget that what she did on earth for her friends at Cana, she will do for us now that she is seated near the Throne of her Son; surely her compassion is not less now, than then; nor her power. That she pleads our cause we may rest assured. She can and will obtain for us the graces signified by the wine at the marriage feast,—the virtues necessary to please both God and Man.

Colloquy.

O most compassionate Mother, in thy goodness look down upon me, the Spouse of thy Dear Son; and bestow on me thy benediction. Protect me from all the dangers of indifference and sin. Do thou procure for me those good gifts which I most need; ask Jesus to supply me with the spiritual wine of His grace, and His love; and may I show my gratitude to thee by my unwavering devotion.

Resolution.

To have recourse to Mary in the least, and every necessity, considering her ever as the tenderest of Mothers.

Thought for the Day.

Whatever He shall say to you, do ye.

Prayer.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Third Saturday after the Epiphany.

The Espousals of Mary.

Mary, the Mother of JESUS, *was espoused to Joseph.*—S. MATT. I.

I. PRELUDE.

We see Mary at the foot of the Altar, at the moment that she received Saint Joseph, as her Husband:—we observe her modesty, her humility, her union with God.

II. PRELUDE.

Obtain for us grace, O dearest Mother, to gain from this meditation an increasing love for the angelic virtue.

I. POINT.

The Espousals of Mary should inspire us with a love of purity.

Divine Providence willed that Mary should have in Saint Joseph a support, and a protector; one to work for her; to care for her; and to help her in times of difficulty. He was to be the constant witness of her perpetual Virginity; and by the sweat of his brow, to provide for the august Mother of his God. Her vow of chastity was not rendered less inviolable by this union; far from depriving her of the sceptre of virginity, it favoured the wondrous mystery which caused her to become the Virgin-Mother of the King of virgins. Let us implore the succour of this privileged Daughter of the Heavenly Father, and ask of her continually that the love of holy purity may be augmented in us: we may well

confide in her, Who being the Wife of Saint Joseph, remained the Mother most chaste, of Jesus: Mary, ever a Virgin.

II. POINT.

The Espousals of Mary should incline all religious persons to ask her protection, especially with regard to any necessary intercourse with the world.

Had Mary become the Mother of Jesus without having been espoused, she would have been regarded as an infamous person; this God would never permit; but ordained that she should be shielded from any such reproach by her Espousals with Saint Joseph. "Jesus Christ preferred," says Saint Ambrose, "that some should doubt about His own Miraculous Conception, than that any slur should be cast upon the purity of His dear Mother." In our dispensable relations with the world, it is to her we should look for preservation from all that might be contrary to that law of perfect modesty, self-restraint, and holy purity, under which we have undertaken to live; and by which we should do honour to Religion. What a misfortune if we were to lose ever so little of that good reputation, which is so needful, if we would influence others for good, and spread abroad the fragrance of a truly religious life. Were we incautious—imprudent, all the world might have the right to think and speak ill of us; and the fault would rest with ourselves. This is why we should have recourse to Mary; that she may point out any occasion of danger by which we might be compromised; and render our intercourse with the world so prudent, so well regulated, so holy, that we may never be the cause of the least breath of scandal to holy Religion. By her assistance, what remorse, what offences against God may we not avoid.

COLLOQUY.

Most holy Virgin, Mother of God, and therefore worthy of the deepest respect both of Angels and of men, I would implore the succour of thy powerful help; and the assurance of thy protection. Obtain for me a purity of body and soul which nothing may tarnish. I ask this by the recollection of the life of perpetual chastity, which was ratified by thy union with Saint Joseph, on the day of thy Espousals.

RESOLUTION.

In my intercourse with the world, carefully to avoid all unseemly familiarity, and want of gravity.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

PRAYER.

O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception.

Fourth Saturday after the Epiphany.

The mystery of the Purification of Mary.

After the days of her purification, according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they carried the Child JESUS to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.—S. LUKE II.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us go in spirit to the Temple in Jerusalem; and there see Mary offering her Well-beloved Son to the Eternal Father, with loving generosity.

II. PRELUDE.

O Mary, thou art the most generous of all God's creatures; make us to participate in the sentiments of thy heart, when thou didst offer thy First-born Son to His Father in Heaven.

I. POINT.

The Blessed Mother presents her Child as a Victim.

Jesus Christ, in accordance with the designs of God's infinite mercy, was to pour forth His Blood as the Victim, offered upon the Altar of Calvary; and He was to be sacrificed, without the shedding of Blood, upon the Altars of our Churches;—the one Sacrifice is the extension of the other. So also the Blessed Virgin offered her Divine Son, on the Day of His Circumcision, when His Blood was shed: afterwards, without shedding of Blood on the day of her Purification, she made an oblation of her Son to God, for an odour of sweetness. Yes, this most holy Mother gave for our reconciliation this Victim, so dear to God: this Well-beloved Son, the One Object of the complacency of the Everlasting Father. Who can comprehend the measure of the elevating of Mary's heart to God, when offering this incomparable Sacrifice? A Saint has thus reduced her thoughts to words. "O Eternal Father, I, Thy handmaid, present to Thee a Victim for the whole world; a Son—both Thine and mine—in my arms is offered to Thee, as the Morning Sacrifice; hereafter He will be offered, within the arms of the Cross, as the Evening Sacrifice." O that we might lift up our hearts as Mary did, when the Church, her antitype, presents this same Sacrifice to the Eternal Father day by day.—It is the Self-same Victim;—do we offer ourselves together with Him?

II. POINT.

Mary presents her Son in the Temple, as a Priest before God the Father.

We should keep it before our minds that Jesus Christ was then, as now, both Priest and Victim. It had been prescribed by the Law of the Lord that every first-born should be consecrated to Him, in memory of the preservation of the first-born amongst the Hebrews, and the death of all these amongst the Egyptians; and because, according to the law of nature, all the first-born were considered as priests. Thus we see Mary consecrating Him, *Who is the Image of the Invisible God, the First-born of every creature,*—and her First-born also.—She presented before the Lord Him, Who was a Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. And since He could not be a Priest of the order of Aaron, having come Himself to deliver us from the yoke of the Mosaic Law, He was redeemed in His own Temple, whither He had come to fulfil the Old Law, and to take upon Himself the office of Priest under the New. In presenting this High-Priest in the Temple of the earthly Jerusalem, Mary gives us to hope that, after this our exile, she will present us to her Son in the heavenly Jerusalem, as partakers in His Priesthood, and sharers in His Sacrifice; so that we may praise and adore Him, Who for us has been both Priest and Victim.

COLLOQUY.

O merciful, O kind, O sweet Virgin Mary, thou art blessed among women; in offering Thy Son unto the Eternal Father, thou didst accept most willingly and with heroic devotion all the designs of Providence, knowing full well that they comprised that sword of Sorrows which

should pierce thy own soul. O Queen of Martyrs! make us generous in the sacrifices which the sublimity of our vocation imposes on us.

RESOLUTION.

To accept the privations and crosses which result from the obligations of our holy estate.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

A sword shall pierce thy soul.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Fifth Saturday after the Epiphany.

Mary's special care in conducting the Spouses of her Son to glory.

Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven. —S. MATT. V.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us contemplate Mary, looking down in love upon her privileged children.

II. PRELUDE.

O Mary, Queen of Virgins, thou hast given us to Jesus, since we have placed in thy hands the sacred vows which unite us to Him: obtain for us that—faithful to our vocation—we may arrive at the perfection of our holy estate.

I. POINT.

Mary encourages religious souls in the difficulties they encounter.

It is right to wish to attain to a high degree of perfection; but we should understand that there will be a proportionate need of watchfulness, if such desires are granted. A soul that has risen to a higher state of perfection, is often more suddenly precipitated into an abyss of misery. The more elevated our position, the more we incur those dangers which may lead to fatal results; our obligations are more extended, —our temptations more frequent.—Our weakness we know too well; and this is why even an Apostle believed he had cause to fear, lest he should become a cast-away. But let us trust in Mary; through her intercession, Jesus will take pleasure in filling our hearts with confidence.—His Mother distributes His graces: she has the privilege of being, after the Holy and Undivided Trinity, the chief cause of our glory and our joy; she is the hope of all who turn to her for help; of all who honour her. Can it be difficult to do this? Does she not surpass, in the perfectness of the Beatific Vision, each individual Saint? and not only this, but her merits and her beauty surpass the combined beauty and merits of them all. Ought we not then, in aiming at that height of perfection to which God has called each of us, to depend on the protection of her whose foot never slipped? and yet she has mounted higher in grace and in glory than any other creature. Our greatest desire should resemble hers; to become more and more holy, that we may the better glorify God:—with this pure intention, we need not fear to fall;—but let our humility make us ever watchful.

II. POINT.

After this our exile, Mary will show us our Spouse—Jesus.

As the Church asks in the Salve Regina, that the Virgin Mary will show unto us the blessed Fruit of her womb, we may understand that to her it belongs to present us hereafter to Jesus. After Him, and through Him, she is the salvation of the world, and more particularly of Religious, because between her pure heart and theirs, there exist the dearest and most intimate relations. It must be—how could it be otherwise?—her highest delight to pour into chosen souls the fulness of those graces of which she is the Dispenser; since they have renounced the hopes and joys of this world to follow in the train of a God, who was suffering, —poor,—and lowly. The greater our generosity, the more will Mary give us to participate in His wonderful virtues;—His poverty,—His purity,—His obedience. She is leading us now step by step, to the Throne of her Son; so shall we enjoy His Presence eternally with her. Let us be faithful to our vocation, fulfilling its duties with unvarying magnanimity; then, after having experienced during this life, the effects of the maternal protection of Mary, we shall have the happiness of being united in glory with Jesus and with her for ever.

COLLOQUY.

O divine Mary,—powerful Protector of souls devoted to Jesus, thy Adorable Son,—thou knowest the dangers I daily incur in consequence of the enmity of the world and the devil. Bless me, and look mercifully upon me, and after the time of my exile, show me the blessed Fruit of thy womb—Jesus.

RESOLUTION.

In all temptations to go to Mary, with child-like confidence.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Behold your Mother.

PRAYER.

We fly to thy Patronage.

Sixth Saturday after the Epiphany.

Mary's practical Faith.

The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed. —S. MATT. XIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us contemplate the faith of the Mother of God; and see how it is observable in her actions.

II. PRELUDE.

O God, Who didst bestow on Mary so great faith, give to us more constancy in ours; and increase that which we already possess.

I. POINT.

The faith of the Blessed Virgin in the midst of trials.

Our Lady has been called the "grain of mustard-seed;" because, in consequence of her humility, she appeared so little in her own eyes, and in the eyes of the whole world; but afterwards she increased so much in greatness and power, that she might be likened to a "cedar of Libanus," the joy of the whole earth. The beginning of the glory and greatness of Mary was the little grain of Faith, deposited by God within her heart in the moment of her Immaculate Conception: this ever growing, produced in her those acts of

faith which were distinguished by their intensity. This Faith shone forth in the hour when it was most tried. She believed, without hesitation, in the word of the Angel, when he announced to her that she should become the Mother of Jesus, without detriment to her vow of chastity; so that it was by faith she conceived the Son of the Eternal Father. Again, during the cruel Passion of our Saviour, when He was overwhelmed by the deep floods of humiliation and suffering, when the scandal of the Cross shook the faith of the Apostles, Mary remained firm and unshaken, standing beside her Son. O faithful Virgin, ask of Jesus daily to increase our faith.

II. POINT.

Mary's faith was the cause of her loving zeal, displayed after the Resurrection.

It resulted from Mary's conception of faith, that in her was produced the Conception of the Incarnate Word. Saint Augustine says "that the most holy Virgin was herself the exemplification of a hidden mystery, to be revealed in due time:—she had a more perfect knowledge of God, of divine and mystic doctrine, than all the Saints of the Old or New Testament had, or could have". As we have before seen, Mary hid herself behind the veil of silence, lest attention should be drawn to her; but after the Resurrection of her Son, she watched, for several years, over the Infant Church; it was for this our Lord left her on earth. By Him she had a definite work given her to do; and then it was that she drew upon the stores of divine science she possessed, and transmitted it to the Apostles and Disciples;—making manifest to them the mysterious secrets which had been entrusted to her keeping.—Let us again imitate Mary; and by our words and our example edify those with whom we may have to do:

building them up in the Faith, if God permit us thus to promote the interests of His Holy Church. What a privilege it must have been to listen to our Lady, the Seat of Wisdom, as she spoke of the mysteries of the Faith; but she can help us from Heaven, by asking that the gift of knowledge may be bestowed on us her children, and our faith be thus deepened and increased.

COLLOQUY.

My Mother, thy cousin proclaimed thee blessed, *because thou hadst believed;* I have recourse to thee, to obtain an unalterable faith in the midst of every trial:—an active faith, which shall give life, strength, and movement to all the powers of my soul; a faith which shall sanctify all my thoughts,—my desires,—and my actions.

RESOLUTION.

To live by the spirit of faith.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Thou art blessed, because thou hast believed.

PRAYER.

We fly to thy Patronage.

MEDITATIONS.

SUNDAYS.

First Sunday in Advent.

Jesus predicts the Last Judgment.

Men shall wither away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of Heaven shall be moved: And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty: But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand.—S. Luke xxi.

I. Prelude.

Let us represent to ourselves the general overthrow of nature; and our Lord descending on the clouds of heaven.

II. Prelude.

O Jesus, grant to us the grace of salvation, so that we may be numbered with the Saints, when Thou shalt come to judge the world.

I. Point.

The fear and consternation of sinners.

Men shall wither away with fear and expectation of what shall come upon the earth. The Coming of the Sovereign

Judge will produce effects in the hearts of the wicked, very different from those produced in the hearts of the just. Sinners will have nothing to expect but the sentence of death, and eternal condemnation: added to this, they will be filled with remorse, and overwhelmed with sorrow: all the vain reasoning which they have made use of, during their life-time, to authorise its disorders, will disappear. Those who shall have pleased themselves at the expense of their conscience,—those who abusing the grace of God shall have become insensibly blinded and hardened, —and those who, knowing their duty, have betrayed it through human respect,—will then see their own folly when it is too late:—for time will be over, eternity will have begun. The day of mercy will be past, tears and regrets will be unavailing. In what despair will not they find themselves, who, as we, have received higher graces; and have, alas! abused them. He Whom once they called their Spouse, will be their Judge; and before His awful Tribunal are to be made manifest every work,—and thought, —and intention,—and secret of the heart. O God, it is certain that we shall all be present at that terrible judgment: grant that we may prepare for it during our whole lives; working ceaselessly to attain a place on Thy Right Hand O Jesus, on that dread Day.

II. POINT.

The peace and confidence of the just.

Look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand. If the thought of the Last Judgment ought to penetrate us with wholesome fear, it should not exclude from our minds sentiments of hope, and confidence in the goodness of God; nor even an ardent desire for the second

and glorious Advent of Jesus Christ; because that Day will be the day of deliverance and of joy to the just:—the day on which will be made clear to them the wisdom of God in their regard:—and their own wisdom in corresponding with His merciful designs towards them. And why should we not desire the coming of the Last Day? Seen by the light of Faith what is this present life? A time of trial—of temptation—of peril: a time of sorrow—and of combat, in which we are perpetually exposed to the risk of offending God, and being lost eternally. Why then do we not more earnestly long for the Day which shall put an end to all danger and suffering? the Day which, in securing to the Disciples of Jesus the reward of their labours, and in uniting them for ever to the company of the Elect, will glorify the Eternal Father, by bringing His children safe into their everlasting inheritance. The faithful Spouses of Jesus will rejoice as they encircle Him, for then there shall be no more sorrow, nor mourning: *for the former things shall have passed away.*

COLLOQUY.

O Sovereign Judge, in Thy infinite goodness, Thou hast warned me of Thy Second Coming on the earth, so that I may be prepared for it! Grant that I may so spend my life here, that I may be found amongst the wise Virgins, who, far from fearing the Advent of their Judge, desire it ardently; knowing that in Him they will recognise, with joy, their Celestial Bridegroom. In order that I may confidently rely on Thy mercy, I pray that I may prove my love of Thee, by serving Thee faithfully—by being entirely Thine.

RESOLUTION.

Generously to fight against those inclinations, or disinclinations, which may hinder the accomplishment of my duty.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

We shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Second Sunday in Advent.

Characteristics of the True Messias.

When John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples, he said to Him: Art Thou He that art to come, or look we for another? And JESUS, making answer, said to them: go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them.—S. MATT. XI.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves the envoys of Saint John-the-Baptist coming to Jesus Christ,—and the poor, the sick, and the infirm surrounding our Lord; and obtaining from Him their cure.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant, O Lord, that in meditating on Thy character, as the true Messias, we may attach ourselves more entirely to Thy service; through gratitude and an imitative love and zeal.

I. POINT.

The characteristic proofs that Jesus Christ was the True Messias.

Let us consider the reply given by Jesus to the inquiry made by the disciples of John. He did not say that He was the Messias, but He proved it by His works;—He was occupied at the moment in curing the sick,—delivering others from the power of the spirits of darkness; and performing various miracles of mercy. So He answered in these words: *Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them.* The Divine Saviour could not have made a more humble reply; for He did not speak of Himself:—nor a more prudent one; for it was full of wisdom:—nor one more decisive; for no doubt could be left in the mind of Saint John's disciples, when they perceived the numberless miracles which He performed. The prophet Isaias had predicted these things of Him Whom the Lord should anoint, and send to preach, and to heal, and to deliver. We should observe that it was by His deeds that the Messias gave witness to the divinity of His Mission; for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ consists not in words, but in works. And so it is with truly religious persons; it is by their acts of charity and of zeal, by their genuine piety, and humility, that they prove that their mission is from Heaven. They really imitate our Lord by consoling—helping—doing good to, the weak, the poor, the sinful, and the ignorant.—These, and similar proofs of virtue, point out the true followers of the Messias. Let us examine ourselves and see if we can be numbered amongst them.

II. POINT.

The benefits accorded by the Messias, impose upon ourselves certain duties.

The Son of God came from Heaven to earth to save us; He clothed Himself with our nature, that He might gain our hearts, by this manifestation of mercy and love;—that He might remedy our ills by the merits of His Life and Death;—and that He might offer us, in His Adorable Person, every example of virtue which, as Christians, we should imitate. Three things are necessary, if we would receive the benefits He brought down from Heaven for us, as well as for those who were gathered round Him on the occasion of the visit of Saint John's messengers:—firstly, we should carefully consider what it is, which makes Him thus worthy of our love, so that the fire of divine charity may also be enkindled in our hearts:—secondly, we should ask most fervently and confidently that the merits of Jesus may be applied to us for our sanctification and salvation:—thirdly, we should study His example, so that we may shape our lives according to it. If we endeavour to imitate Jesus, we shall not fail, out of love and gratitude, to do for others, as far as we can, that which He, in His divine charity, has done for us.

COLLOQUY.

Thou, the true Messias, art my Saviour and my God; as Thou didst prove Thyself to be such, by Thy works, may I prove myself to be Thy disciple by my daily actions:—bless and fructify, by Thy infinite merits, the mission Thou hast confided to me.

RESOLUTION.

To make frequent acts of faith in the power that Jesus has to heal,—to teach,—and to convert sinners.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

Third Sunday in Advent.

Jesus is too little known by His own creatures.

The Jews sent from Jerusalem Priests and Levites to him, to ask him: Who art thou? And he confessed: I am not the Christ: There hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not.—S. JOHN I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to our minds the banks of the River Jordan, where Saint John was baptising.

II. PRELUDE.

Deign, O good Jesus, to manifest Thyself to us, that we may know Thee; that Thy love may enkindle our hearts; and that we may receive the fruits of Thy Presence in the midst of us.

I. POINT.

Jesus is so little known by men.

There is One amongst you Whom you know not. This unknown Person, of whom Saint John spoke, was the Eternal Word, the Light of the World, come down from Heaven to

guide men on their way thither.—Although He had been pointed out as the Lamb of God, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews refused to believe in His Presence amongst them; and as far as they were able, they forbade the people to accept him as the promised Messias. *The Light had come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light.* And in these our days, how many Christians also live in culpable ignorance of Him. Jesus is in the midst of them in his Church; to instruct them in His doctrine; and to confer on them His Sacraments. By means of the Holy Eucharist He still resides in our cities, towns, and villages; ever ready to remain in our company,—still more, to enter into our hearts, if we will receive Him there; and yet, notwithstanding all these advances on the part of Jesus, although *He stands amongst us*, might not the same inscription be often placed, even on the doors of the Holy Tabernacles, which Saint Paul found upon the Altar at Athens: *To the Unknown God.* Do we not find verified now, as much as heretofore, the words of the beloved Disciple: *He was in the world, and the world knew Him not: He came into His own, and His own received Him not.* When we see our Lord thus unrecognised,—thus ignored by His creatures,—we should be drawn to a closer knowledge of Him ourselves; and we should do our utmost to discover to those who know Him so little, or not at all, the power of His grace; and the love of His Sacred Heart.

II. POINT.

Jesus is too little known by many who make profession of serving Him.

This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the Only God: and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. This saving knowledge of Jesus is what we should strive to acquire with

much diligence and perseverance. It is that treasure—that pearl of great price—to gain which, we should sell all else that we possess, and buy it: for the attainment of which we should make any required sacrifice. And yet—who would give credence to the fact (did we not feel that it is only too true), that we lose sight of this treasure and occupy ourselves about things which are futile?—it is within our reach, but we spend our substance on the acquisition of trifles, which vanish often as we are about to grasp them. We profess to believe in Jesus, but we are so blinded by passing events, that we do not perceive His Presence: He is amongst us, and we receive Him not. Jesus the infinite Good, Whose beauty ravishes the faithful soul, is in the midst of us, and we too often know it not; He comes into our hearts sacramentally, and we leave Him, to attend to the demands of perhaps a vain imagination. Are we then ignorant of the truth, that it is in knowing Jesus, by a living Faith, that we obtain from Him a plenteous supply of that *peace which surpasseth all understanding;* and of those gifts of grace, which lead us on in the way of religious perfection. Let us therefore rightly estimate the value of that treasure which we may make our own;—the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

COLLOQUY.

O my Good Master, whilst I deplore the blindness and ignorance of those who knew Thee not, I confess with sorrow that I have so little appreciated the inestimable Treasure of thy spiritual Presence in the temple of my heart; and of Thy sacramental Presence in the most Holy Eucharist. May it be henceforth my constant endeavour to repair the loss I have incurred at such times as Thou, *O Lamb of God, hast been amongst us, and I knew it not*; and do Thou, O Jesus,

often recall to my mind this promise: *I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee.*

RESOLUTION.

Often to recollect myself, that I may adore Jesus and give Him proofs of attention and of love.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

This is eternal life, to know Him Whom God has sent.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

The Preaching of Saint John-the-Baptist.

The word of the Lord was made unto John the son of Zachary, in the desert: And he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.—S. LUKE III.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us first represent to ourselves the desert of Judea, where Saint John had lived since his childhood:—then the banks of the Jordan, to which he came to baptise.

II. PRELUDE.

O Lord, may we profit by the useful lessons taught us by Thy saintly Precursor, so that we also may, in our conduct, set an example of virtue to those around us.

I. POINT.

Saint John the Baptist prepares to fulfil his mission.

The austere life led by the Forerunner of the Messias in the desert, from his earliest infancy up to the age of twenty-eight, when he began to preach, fills us with surprise. What faults then we would ask, had he to expiate? he, who had been sanctified before his birth, and who had led so angelic a life.—We see in him nought but holiness, in an eminent degree: why then dwell in the dread solitude of the desert; and practise such extreme penance? He proposed by these means, to preserve his innocence, and to grow in virtue:—and before becoming a preacher of penance, and of contempt of the world, he would first teach, by his example, what he would afterwards teach by his words:—how to mortify one's self, and fly from the dangers of the world. Let us learn from this an important lesson: we must not content ourselves with talking of piety and virtue; but we must show that we ourselves believe in what we say. "If any one," says Saint John of the Cross, would inculculate an easy doctrine, do not believe in it, although confirmed by miracles; keep always in the path of austerity; and attend to the maxims of penance; and you will walk in the surest road to Heaven. Penance cannot be less necessary to us than it was to the holy Precursor of our Lord; at this time, when especially preparing for His Coming, we do well to consider how far we have caught Saint John's spirit of penance, which rendered him so pleasing to Jesus, that he said of him, *There hath not risen a greater than John-the-Baptist.* How much more good would result from the counsel we give, if it were preceded and accompanied by our own following of it.

II. POINT.

How Saint John the Baptist accomplished his mission.

Of what sacrifices are not those souls capable that are filled with the Spirit of God! This Saint, even from his earliest childhood, deprived himself of all those enjoyments which belong to that tender age. To fulfil God's purposes, he spent his life apart from Him, Whose way he came to prepare; and deprived himself of the happiness of passing his youth in the company of the Saviour. When God afterwards called him from the solitude of the wilderness, and bade him converse with sinners, and baptise them, he at once quitted his retreat, endeared to him by so many years of silent communion with his Creator. He obeyed the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and at length began the immediate preparation for the Coming of the Messias; which was his peculiar mission. In him we see what the work of the Blessed Spirit is, in those who are faithful in corresponding to the movements of grace. Willingly they relinquish their own interests,—their wishes,—their taste for solitude even,—when it is a question of serving their neighbour—of gaining him to Jesus Christ. The aim of our lives should be to promote His glory and honour, in that sphere in which we have been placed by God: *that we walk worthy of the vocation in which we are called.*

COLLOQUY.

Most blessed Forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose life of mortification and devotedness offers me a perfect example of sanctity, and of holy zeal, obtain for me, by thy intercession, an entire devotion to the service of God,—a generous detachment from all selfish interests,—and a readi-

ness to sacrifice all that is dearest to my heart, if by so doing, I can better please Him.

RESOLUTION.

To lead a life of mortification, and so to prepare myself for the Coming of the Lord.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

DURING THE OCTAVES OF CHRISTMAS AND OF THE EPIPHANY, THE MEDITATIONS FOR THE SUNDAYS ARE GIVEN AMONGST THE GENERAL MEDITATIONS FOR THOSE SEASONS.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Devotion for the Holy Name.

His Name shall be called JESUS: For He shall save His people from their sins.—S. MATT. I.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us consider the effect of this sacred Name, in Heaven,—on earth,—and under the earth.

II. PRELUDE.

Deign, O Lord, to engrave Thy most holy Name in my heart, as a sign of Thy entire dominion over me, and as a pledge of future happiness.

I. POINT.

The holy Name of Jesus is worthy of our highest homage.

The sovereign perfections of the God-Man are enfolded in His Name of JESUS; but particularly His mercy and His love. It comprises with Itself, all the favours, virtues, and gifts from Heaven which are means, to us, of sanctification: —the whole system of our happiness, both present and eternal. It signifies that He Who bore It, is our Saviour,—Good Shepherd,—and Advocate with God.—It expresses the humiliations and sufferings to which He was condemned, to deliver us from the power of sin, and everlasting death. What could be more venerable than *this Name, which is above every name;* in It Heaven recognises its King,—earth, its Deliverer,—and hell, its Vanquisher. In Heaven,

the bliss of the Saints is in the homage they bring It;—on earth, the Church offers to It her sacrifice of prayer and praise;—in hell the devils glorify It, for they tremble at its sound. Name full of strength and power! by it only can we be saved; by our invocation of It, our temptations are dispersed,—our troubles disappear,—and peace is restored to our souls. In the sacred Name of Jesus the Martyrs have found their strength,—the Confessors their courage,—the Virgins their love for the angelic virtue,—and all the Saints their excellence. Let us then revere It, and invoke It, with unbounded confidence; at all times, but above all, in the hour of trial.

II. POINT.

The Name of Jesus is worthy of our sincerest love.

Thy Name is as oil poured out. This is a simile, which expresses perfectly the properties of the word JESUS. Like oil It gives light,—It cures,—It nourishes. During His Life, Jesus was the Light of the world, enlightening by His precepts and example:—on Calvary Jesus shed His precious Blood for the cure of our souls:—on our Altars, the Body and Blood of Jesus are perpetually offered, and become the Food of the Faithful. O Sacred Name, like holy oil penetrate thou into our souls; thou art that sweet unction which has shed itself abroad from the moment of the Incarnation; and seeks ever to spread its gracious influence on every side. May the sweetness of Thy charms, O Jesus, and the power of Thy gentleness, find entrance into our souls; so that purified by Thee, united to Thee, and filled with the joy of possessing Thee, the words of the Holy Spirit may be realised in us: *Thy Name is as oil poured out; therefore the virgins have loved Thee.*

Colloquy.

Divine Jesus, Light and Life of our souls, I would ask Thee by what mystery of love Thou deignest to pour Thy Very Self into the hearts of Thy unworthy creatures? is it not by means of Thy sacred Name? Thy Heart gives answer: *I am God*, and *God is Charity*.—Silently then let me adore this Name; so full of gracious charms. Be thou ever in my heart, and on my lips: to dispel my fears,—to rejoice my soul,—to distance temptations,—and vanquish my enemies. May I have no taste for that in which I find not Jesus,—may no intercourse please me, in which the holy Name is not heard. It shall be to my mouth sweeter than honey;—to my ears, more enchanting than the purest melody;—to my heart a source of perpetual joy. O Jesus! Name of benediction,—of peace,—of gentleness,—of power,—and of salvation; to Thee be all honour, praise, and glory, now and for ever.

Resolution.

To pronounce the Name of Jesus with profound respect; and invoke It with lively confidence.

Thought for the Day.

His Name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

Prayer.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

The Cure of the Leper.

And when Jesus *was come down from the mountains, great multitudes followed Him: And behold a leper came and adored Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean: And Jesus stretching forth His Hand, touched him, saying: I will, be thou made clean.*—S. Matt. viii.

I. Prelude.

We can imagine that we see Jesus at the foot of the mountain: He is followed by a great multitude of people.

II. Prelude.

Grant us, O Jesus, to draw from this meditation both faith and trust in Thy goodness and mercy.

I. Point.

The devotion of our Lord to His Ministry amongst men.

Well may we gaze admiringly at our Lord. He had just been speaking for several hours to the assembled multitude; but fatigue did not lessen His patience and His affability. The crowd pressed around Him; wondering at that which they had heard;—those words of truth and life, which had been uttered by our Adorable Saviour. And now His attention was attracted by a leper, who presented himself before Him, to be cured of his leprosy. His sad appearance inspired the bystanders with mingled pity and horror, but he heeds them not: prostrating himself before the Heavenly Physician,

full of confidence in His power, yet of resignation to His Will, he cries out: *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;*—in these few and simple words, we see both trust and faith. Then Jesus, Whose compassionate Heart seeks only to relieve the unfortunate, being touched with pity, replied: *I will, be thou made clean.* Let us put ourselves in the place of the leper; and ask our Lord to pronounce over us the same powerful and healing words. Thou seest, O Jesus, that our souls are tainted with the leprosy of sin:—in all faith and confidence we beg of Thee to purify them; knowing that Thou wilt hear our petition, as Thou didst that of the poor leper.

II. POINT.

Jesus is ever ready to heal those who acknowledge their misery and their need.

We are told that the leper adored Jesus; he knelt in His Presence as a suppliant; he had received the gift of faith, by which he believed that Jesus had the power to heal him; he now made use of it: are we making use of this precious gift? When we kneel, as suppliants before Jesus, do we believe that He can and will grant our requests? do we make them in simple words, and simple trust? When we ask for some bodily cure,—for some temporal benefits, for ourselves, or others,—we too should say: *If Thou wilt;* if it be for Thy greater honour and glory,—if it be for the futherance of our eternal good. Let us make our petition according to our desires,—speak with our Lord of our troubles, whatever they may be; but all along, our chief wish should be, that His divine Will should be accomplished; and His glory advanced. Yet when we ask for the cure of our own soul, our confidence amounts to assurance, for this He cannot refuse us; He

will most undoubtedly stretch forth His right Hand to save us. The law excluded lepers from the society of men; and by our sin we exclude ourselves from the company of Jesus; but, to beg for his recovery, this leper dared to approach; it is thus with ourselves: disfigured by sin, we must remain at a distance from our Saviour, until we turn towards Him to obtain the cleansing of our souls. He did not turn away in disgust, but touched the leper; He acts in the same way with regard to repentant sinners; and will say likewise to them: *I will, be thou made clean.* How should this encourage us to trust in the mercy of our Saviour, notwithstanding our many sins: humbling ourselves repeatedly before Him, let us ask Him yet more and more to purify us, by His grace.

COLLOQUY.

O Divine Physician, I adore Thee, and acknowledge that marvellous power, by which Thou canst order health to return to both our bodies and our souls. Thou art so full of compassion and of goodness, that Thou deignest to relieve our misery.—A single act of Thy Will, a single word spoken by Thee, suffices; I beg of Thee to bestow on me chiefly the cure of my spiritual maladies,—entrusting me with health and strength, to use for Thy greater glory, if Thou wilt.

RESOLUTION.

To go at once to Jesus, whatever be my failings or miseries.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.

PRAYER.

O Jesus, living in Mary.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

The Tempests of the Soul.

Why are you fearful? have you not faith yet?—S. MARK IV.

I. PRELUDE.

We see Jesus standing in the ship, rebuking the wind; and saying to the sea, *Peace, be still: And there was made a great calm.*

II. PRELUDE.

O Saviour, full of goodness, and Who deignest to be honoured by our confidence, confirm in us this virtue; so that the most violent storms within may not shake our trust in Thee.

I. POINT.

To be acquainted with the danger is of the first importance, in the midst of our spiritual tempests.

There are certain tempests which put the soul in great danger of being wrecked; we cannot be too prompt in allaying them; yet we often lose time, because we begin to make efforts in our own strength. Sometimes a passion increases in violence, because we commence to reason about it, instead of combating it. A slight humiliation,—a little affront,—a small contradiction,—and the winds of pride are awakened; the waves of impatience arise in consequence, and the soul is imperiled. If the menacing danger be not perceived in time, its ultimate loss is greatly to be appre-

hended. Again, of the risk we are running we are perhaps aware:—we do not avoid it by having speedy recourse to our Lord, but offend Him by seeking for human succour, and natural consolation, which can never really lull the storms of passion. If they appear to do so for a while, it is but to cause them to break forth with greater fury.—Perhaps to punish us for our infidelities, or to try our faith, Jesus seems to sleep; let us but redouble our cries: *Lord, save us, we perish,*—as did the Apostles, when Jesus was asleep in the hinder part of the ship. O Saviour, let us never forget that in Thy apparent sleep, *Thy Heart watcheth.* When we are tempest-tossed, let not our hearts sleep, but have recourse to Thee,—instantly, yet patiently;—confidently, yet humbly.

II. POINT.

In times of a spiritual tempest we must remain in the ship with Jesus.

Why are you fearful? Where Jesus is, there is perfect safety; at His Side none can perish. When clouds of distrust gather together in the imagination,—when the storms of passion begin to assail the heart, let us take refuge near to Him, so shall we pass securely over the raging billows, *and be brought to the haven which we wish for;* for Jesus will arise, and rebuke the tempest, whether it be in the imagination, heart, or soul; and there *shall come a great calm.* His power over nature is absolute; let it be so over us.—*What manner of Man is this? for the winds and the sea obey Him.*—What wonder, for He is their Creator! *We cried unto the Lord in our affliction and He brought us out of our distresses: He turned the storm into a breeze, and its waves were still: and we rejoiced.* Can this give rise to incredulous astonishment?—Is He not our Father?

COLLOQUY.

O my Adorable Master, how often have I proved myself to be wanting in faith. Instead of going at once to Thee, to seek peace of mind and tranquillity of soul, I have given way to needless fear, and hasty alarm. But henceforth I intend to call upon Thee for help, when the storms of trial and temptation arise; knowing that it does indeed *concern Thee that I perish not*, and that Thou wilt hear my prayer.

RESOLUTION.

To keep near to Jesus, in order to avoid every sort of danger.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Peace, be still: And there was made a great calm.

PRAYER.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Cockle.

The kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way: And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle: And the servants of the goodman of the house coming, said to him: Sir, didst

thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this.—S. MATT. XIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us represent to ourselves a vast plain, in the middle of which Jesus addresses the assembled people.

II. PRELUDE.

Teach us, O Lord, to adore Thy judgments, and to fear them; and grant that by faithfulness in serving Thee, we may merit to be received into the Kingdom of eternal recompense.

I. POINT.

During this life the wicked are side by side with the good.

Our Lord Himself expounded to the Apostles this parable: *He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man: The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the Kingdom: the cockle are the children of the wicked one: And the enemy that sowed them is the devil.* These, who own this enemy for their Master, occupy the same field as those who are the true servants of the Goodman of the house. The good, whom God has placed in the world that they may ripen unto the eternal Kingdom, by the practice of virtue, are constantly harassed and persecuted by the bad; so that they are often tempted to ask, why God delays to exterminate them from the face of the earth. Thus we hear the servants in the parable saying, when they saw the cockle growing together with the good seed: *Sir, wilt thou that we go and gather it up?* Let us listen to the wise answer given by the good Master: *No, lest perhaps, gathering up the*

cockle, you root up the wheat also, together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest. If God took the wicked out of the world, He would deprive the just of the means of acquiring the highest merits, which they now gain, through the exercise of true patience and fidelity:—and, moreover, is it not possible that the wicked may themselves be converted, and become good wheat? a precious crop, of which premature severity might deprive the Owner of the field. We bless Thee, O God, with our whole heart for Thy great wisdom, and infinite goodness; for hast Thou not borne with us—waited for us—when we might have been reckoned amongst Thine enemies? We beseech of Thee to extend a like patience and mercy towards those who offend Thee, and for whom we are bound to pray; so that, vanquished by the power of Thy grace, and Thy Fatherly goodness, they may live and grow in Thee, and be saved.

II. POINT.

The separation of the bad from the good will take place at the end of the world.

In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it in bundles to burn: but the wheat gather ye into my barn. When the moment, fixed by God for the destruction of the world shall have arrived, all mankind must appear before His Tribunal; and then will be made the great separation between the wicked and the just. Let us observe the order in which our Lord speaks of these two classes. First of the wicked: *I will say to the Reapers*: that is, the Angels, *Gather up first the cockle:* He utters the condemnation of the rebellious, without delay; as if He would pass rapidly over a loss so painful to Him, Who once died to save them

all: it must be done: their evil deeds—perhaps one mortal sin—have never been repented of; therefore they cannot be garnered with the good wheat. *Bind the cockle into bundles to burn:* they will be bound by the links of those sins, and the bonds of those iniquities, which they have committed; and *thus cast into the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. But,* adds our Saviour, *gather ye the wheat into My barn;* grain by grain,—each carefully set in the place appointed by Him, Who knows His own, from the greatest of His Saints to the least of His Brethren; and as if lovingly dwelling on this subject, so dear to His Heart, He continues: *The just shall then shine as the sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.*

Colloquy.

Give me, O my God, to understand these things; impress upon me a wholesome fear of Thy judgments, but at the same time fill me with an unalterable trust in Thy mercy; and grant, that abandoning myself to the guidance of Thy Providence, I may merit, at the Last Day, to be gathered by the Angels, as good and pure wheat, fit for the heavenly Garner.

Resolution.

To bear with patience, as God does, the growing together of the good and the bad; praying that those may persevere, and these be converted.

Thought for the Day.

God our Saviour will have all men to be saved.

Prayer.

Our Father, and Hail Mary.

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Parable of the Leaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.—S. MATT. XIII.

I. PRELUDE.

We see before us a vast plain, and in the midst of it is Jesus, addressing an assemblage of people.

II. PRELUDE.

Grant to us, O God, grace to understand the great love Thou dost display towards mankind, by the accomplishment of those Mysteries which Jesus taught in parables.

I. POINT.

The parable of the leaven is typical of the mysteries of the Incarnation, and of the Redemption.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which is that portion of dough, already existing, that is incorporated into the new mass; and causes the fermentation which is necessary to render the bread wholesome. By this homely illustration our Lord pourtrays to us that Mystery of Love which made Him descend from Heaven; and incorporate Himself into the human race, that He might raise it up in the likeness of the Divine Image. He united by His Incarnation, His Divinity to our humanity; and this He did for

us,—and for our salvation:—He leavened the world by His entrance into it; communicating the virtue of His Divine Life to all people who, dwelling therein, become members of that mystical Body, of which He is the Head. We again see the aptness of the similitude made use of in this parable, in looking upon our Lord as our Redeemer. He submitted to all sorts of ignominy,—He was roughly handled,—His Holy Body was bruised and torn: *And we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness.* He was like unto the formless leaven: God disguised Himself, in order to communicate the virtue of His Passion to His Church: *that He might present it to Himself, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that It should be holy and without blemish.* Let us ask Jesus not to allow our minds to reject the instruction He gives in parables, but that they may be to us food for pious reflection; and that He may reveal to us their hidden meaning.

II. POINT.

The parable of the leaven prefigured the Eucharist.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven; which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal: until the whole was leavened. The Mysteries of the God-made-Man, and of His Passion, as the Saviour, surpass without doubt, all that created intelligence might conceive of, or hope from, His goodness. But the loving thoughtfulness of Jesus for His Church would find out another manner of incorporating Himself with Her children. To each of us He would make an especial gift of His merits—of His graces—of Himself, in His Divinity and Humanity, by means of the Holy Eucharist. Through this Mystery He contracts so intimate a union with our souls and our bodies that we are changed

into Him. Here we understand the three measures of meal to be the three powers of our soul. Our memory should be filled with the things of God only;—the sentiments of our heart and mind should tend upwards towards God;—our will should be conformable to God's most holy Will. Such are the good effects which the Eucharist should produce in us; and yet these are not the only fruits of the Adorable Sacrament:—deposed within us, by means of It, are the germs of immortality, which survive the dissolution of the body: God's Eye looks upon our bodies in decay, and distinguishes in these remains something supernatural:—the impress left upon them by the Sacramental touch—the Eucharistic indwelling of His Beloved Son. At the signal given for the Resurrection, these bodies will rise from their tombs, clothed in the glory which shall be the vestment of the risen, living members of Jesus Christ.—This last effect of the Sacred Leaven of the communicated Life of Jesus, is assured to us, who have been partakers of It; and have been penetrated by the spirit and virtues which this Life imparts.

Colloquy.

O Divine Jesus, I adore Thee in Thy Mysteries of Love. May I experience the fruit of them in my own soul; may I understand how unworthy I should be of Thy goodness, were I not to repay it, at least, with gratitude; and render Thee, as far as I can, love for love. May my whole being be leavened by Thy Life, so that I may say with the Apostle: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*

Resolution.

To think often during this day of the great Mysteries of

Love on which I have meditated; and to consecrate anew to Jesus my heart,—my mind,—my will.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

DAYS OF RETREAT.

The Day of Retreat in December.

The Five Sacred Wounds of our Lord.

He was wounded for our iniquities.—ISAIAS LIII.

I. PRELUDE.

Let us behold our Lord on His Cross; and adore, with reverential love, His Five Most Precious Wounds.

II. PRELUDE.

By Thy Holy Wounds, O Saviour, which shall be to the Saints a theme of thanksgiving throughout Eternity, make us to understand, that if we would hereafter share in Thy glory, we must now be ready to participate in Thy sorrows and sufferings.

I. POINT.

What fruits we should gather from the contemplation of the Wounds of Jesus Christ.

We must enter into the designs of our Divine Saviour, Who wills that His Wounds should be our Refuge in the hour of temptation. If we retire within them, we shall be sheltered from the darts of the enemy. No prayer can

surpass in excellence, the prayer of promptitude; through which we at once withdraw, by making an act of humility and confidence, into a mysterious Fortress, wherein we are not only safe, but the foe retreats, and victory is ours. The Adorable Wounds of Jesus are, to His faithful ones, the dearest subject of consolation, in the midst of the numberless ills of this life. However great they may be, they appear but little, when we turn from the consideration of them, to the contemplation of Jesus, fastened to the Cross. This holy practice of meditating on the deep prints of the nails in His Loved Hands and Feet, and on the lance wound in His Divine Heart, we should make our own. Let it become familiar to us;—a constant exercise of love, faith, confidence, and humility.

II. POINT.

In accordance with His mysterious love for us, Jesus Christ willed that His Right Side should be opened after His Death by the soldier's spear.

Saint Bernard thus speaks on this point: "Observe that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the hour of His Passion, after an inexplicable manifestation of His goodness towards us, chose to permit that His Right Side should be pierced; to signify that He desired to pour over us, all His blessings and all His graces. And this, because the right side represents to our minds spiritual good, and eternal recompense;—and the left, temporal good, and perishable rewards:—hence He would have us to understand, that it was in His Right Side that He would prepare for our souls a Place of refuge." *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest* within the sacred orifice of the Wounds of Jesus Christ? Are we imitating the mystic

dove?—rising and quitting the earth, and retiring into the clefts of the Rock, into the open Side of Jesus? Are we careful therein to attain a safe position? so that when our Lord appears, we may be found at His Right Hand; and may hear, not the words pronounced against those on the left: *Depart from Me*, but the gracious invitation: *Come: you who have continued with Me: you who are the blessed of My Father: possess the kingdom prepared for you.*

III. POINT.

Why did our Lord after His Resurrection, preserve the Scars of His Five Wounds?

Our Saviour willed to bear for ever, in His glorified Body, these Marks of His triumph over sin and death; as an eternal witness of His love for man. Not content with having offered Himself as a Victim for sin, He resolved to preserve these Wounds of Love, to console,—to encourage, —and to save all who look, by faith, on them. He would carry them even into Heaven itself, that He might present them continually before the Face of His Father; to win thereby new graces for us. And when He shall appear again at the end of the world, they will shine resplendently; so that the Faithful will rejoice exceedingly, whilst the wicked will be confounded, for: *They shall look on Him Whom they have pierced.* Let us look upon them now, in daily contemplation, and with ever-increasing confidence and love, so that we may exult with all the just, when *we shall see Him as He is.*

COLLOQUY.

O my Jesus, what precious disclosures of love do Thy Sacred Wounds make to me, when I contemplate them.

What riches of grace, what divine resources, dost Thou offer to me, Thy child, in showing me the Adorable Wounds in Thy Hands and Feet and Side. Let me kiss them with loving reverence, and adore them in lowly prostration of body and soul.

RESOLUTION.

In every trial and difficulty, I will fly for safety and succour to the Wounds of my Saviour.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

Within Thy Wounds hide me.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

The Day of Retreat in December.

CONSIDERATIONS.

The Life of Prayer and Contemplation.

When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber; and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee.—S. MATT. VI.

I. POINT.

The necessity of habitual composure of mind, to discharge aright the duty of prayer.

According to the interpretation of the holy Fathers, Jesus Christ, by these words, would express to us the necessity of recollection in prayer:—*When thou shalt pray, enter;* that is to say, enter into thyself; and prepare for an interview with God. Gather up the powers of thy mind, put outside all remembrance of creatures, all wandering thoughts, all earthly affections; and then close the door of thy heart, keeping God only therein. *The Kingdom of God is within you.* Our heart then is the inner sanctuary where He wills to be. *God is a spirit, and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth.* Into this sanctuary He descends to receive our homage, and to hear our prayer. Let us now consider, in the first place, with what obstacles the virtue of recollectedness meets in those whose minds are in a constant state of turmoil, and who make no effort to gain habitual composure of mind. In such a case, how is it possible, in accordance with the injunction of the Divine Master, to enter into one's self at the time of prayer? to get rid, at the moment, of vain and frivolous thoughts? of those affections of the heart which divide and occupy it?—We cannot. And why? Because we will not enter into ourselves, and shut the door of our heart;—because these vain and frivolous thoughts please us;—we are attached to them;—to dismiss them would cost us something, and we dislike trouble and constraint. We feel perhaps that to combat these thoughts would lead to a change necessarily; and any such change is alarming, since it might involve us in strife against nature; and we are not prepared to desire her destruction. Is this our case? is it so, that we will not enter into ourselves and close the door?—Perchance we make some unsustained efforts, we try now and then to be recollected; but the impression produced by worldly matters remains so vividly in our minds, that at every instant it chases

away the holy thoughts we wish we could retain; and the imagination being unmortified, well knows how to escape control, and plays with our weak endeavours to be occasionally recollected. Dare we say we have earned the right to expect to be aided by a particular grace? Let us here question our consciences and past experience. We may mourn sincerely over the hindrances to prayer we discover in ourselves,—but this does not make them less real, as obstacles to our union with God. It is true that any difficulties in prayer do not render us guilty before God, when they are not self-made:—when not consequent upon our neglect in cultivating a spirit of recollection; but to attain this spirit, and to retain it, always and in all places, should be our constant aim.

II. POINT.

Silence in a soul, attracts God to itself.

It is not amid the confusion and tumult of a disturbed heart and mind, that the Holy Spirit makes Himself heard. *The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire: The Voice, like the whistling of a gentle air,* was heard by the Prophet, when silence had ensued; and he had covered his face with a mantle. Here we see typified the calm and peaceful heart, veiled to outward impressions, and disposed *to hear what the Lord God will speak.*—Are we ready at all times to say *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth?* It was in solitude that God of old spoke with His servants, as we see in the case of Moses, Elias, and Samuel: and so it is still with regard to ourselves;—in the solitary heart, His Voice is heard. *I will allure her and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.* It is there that He causes the soul to drink in the effects of His divine sweetness, and of His great mercy: *I will espouse thee to Me*

in justice and judgment and mercy. Thus intimately will God unite Himself to those, who are drawn towards Him by a living, loving faith: thus closely will He be linked to them by those graces and virtues which are the essentials of justice and holiness. And, according to His promise, nothing will separate from His embrace the faithful soul, whose existence is lost in the Life of her Lord: *I will espouse thee for ever.*

III. POINT.

The Saints' love of solitude.

Are we astonished that the Saints have always loved solitude, and sought for it so eagerly? that they have lived solitary lives, yes, even when they have been unable to retire wholly from the world? They have found out the secret of making their heart a place of retreat, wherein bud forth and blossom the flowers of sanctity;—they dwell alone with God and *see His beauty.* Such have been the lives of saintly Pontiffs at the head of the government of the Church; of saintly Priests and Missionaries, who have been unceasingly occupied in the ministry of their charge, and in apostolic labours; and yet, always united to God.—Such have been also the lives of holy kings upon their thrones, and of the holy men and women who have been called to serve God and His Church in the world. This love of solitude has peopled the deserts, and filled the cloister with those to whom eternal quietude and a strict Rule of life have been powerful aids, in their search for repose in God; and its constant enjoyment. "O happy solitude, in thee is peace"; happy solitude wherein we speak to God, and He to us; we present ourselves to Him, and He enriches us with His gifts of grace. O blessed home of silence, in thee we find true blessedness, even on earth; there we are put in posses-

sion of the Only Good which can content our hearts and meet our desires. Let us, each one, strive to build up and live within this mystic cell,—to learn the lesson of true recollection; so that, praying unceasingly, we may be prepared to serve our Lord, whether it be with Martha in active work, or with Mary in prayer and contemplation.

The Day of Retreat in January.

The ardent desire a Religious should have to acquire perfection.

He that is holy, let him be sanctified still.—Apoc. xxii.

I. Prelude.

Let us represent to ourselves two classes of Religious: in the one, those are to be found who are diligently and constantly occupied about their advancement in perfection, refusing nothing the Good Master asks of them: in the other, they who are weighed down by the yoke of Religion, and take little pains to forward their spiritual interests.

II. Prelude.

O Holy Spirit, Celestial Light, come Thou and enlighten our souls:—O Sacred Fire of purest Love, come Thou and enkindle in our hearts an ardent longing for perfection.

I. Point.

How important it is to have a great desire for perfection.

A sincere wish to become more and more perfect, produces in us a firm determination to live holily; refusing God nothing which might or could be pleasing to Him. Amongst the many who are consecrated to God in holy Religion, few are to be found who take this generous resolution; there is a fear of following after perfection, lest its pursuit should entail some difficulty;—something painful to nature. There are those who work with little energy, at a task which demands so much; nevertheless, they perform some good actions; for instance, they would not like to omit any exercises of piety, which are of obligation; they are resolved rather to die, than not to persevere in the state of life they have embraced; but even in these same spiritual exercises they are tepid, they fulfil them it is true, but without real love towards God. In the performance of good works, they make choice of such as suit best their natural disposition, and give them personal satisfaction; they neglect those very virtues which would render them more perfect. The result is, that their life is a mixture of good and evil; their heart is divided,—not being given entirely to God. Let us consider what our inclinations are. Certain it is that none will arrive at perfection, unless they strive after it sincerely; and not only sincerely, but ardently; as if desiring to obtain the greatest treasure it is possible to possess. Is this desire in us? if we find we have it, is it sincere? We may judge of this by the way in which we oblige ourselves to practice a holy life, in order to become more pleasing to God. What then are our feelings, our desires, our projects? We know that we must not lose sight of the aim of the religious life; it always remains the same,—a tending towards perfection:—we must remember too, that we must be holy now, if we would hope to be numbered amongst the Saints in Heaven. O Saviour, grant that

appreciating the favour Thou hast shown to those whom Thou hast called to the religious life, we may strive after perfection therein.

II. Point.

In what the firm purpose of tending towards perfection consists.

When a person has resolved to be "all for God," no means are slighted which may facilitate advancement in the way of virtue and the chief means are: the practice of the Presence of God,—mortification of all natural and rebellious inclinations,—care to keep the heart free, and unattached from all that is not God. These resolutions, made with generosity, are ties which firmly unite the soul to Him. Have we adopted measures by which we may fairly expect to attain to perfection in Religion? Of what moment it is, that we should understand the necessity of practical means, if we intend really to die to ourselves; and with constancy to do the Will of Him Who has called us.

Colloquy.

Thou art so good, O Lord, to me, thus to recall to my mind to-day, that I must strive after perfection: and yet I am so far off from it.—Let it not be, that I live any longer so useless and listless a life, by which Thou art glorified so imperfectly; but grant that henceforth, I may have one only desire, that of pleasing Thee,—one only aim and object,—that of studying how best to accomplish Thy Holy Will. Thus, dying to myself and living to Thee, and for Thee, may I bring forth fruits of holiness, and promote Thy glory and my own perfection.

RESOLUTION.

From to-day, until my next Retreat, I will seek to make better use of the means of sanctification brought before me in this meditation; often will I say to myself that, I will win perfection, cost what it may. When tempted to allow in myself some imperfection, I will ask myself: Would the Saints have acted thus? Is such an action worthy of one who ought to be making every effort to become really holy?

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

He that is holy let him be sanctified still.

PRAYER.

Take, O Lord, and receive.

The Day of Retreat in January.

CONSIDERATIONS.

Purity of Heart.

Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God.—S. MATT. v.

I. POINT.

The necessity of a pure heart in those who approach God in prayer.

Our soul may be likened to the water of a fountain;

when it is pure, it reflects clearly the sun's rays: God takes pleasure in a pure heart; He sees in it His own reflexion—as in a shining mirror; the image of His own beauty is thrown upon it. This mirror becomes itself a lesser source of light: it is irradiated by the Sun of Justice, thus borrowing from It the light which forms its beauty. The purity of God is united to that of the soul, and which came, at first, from Him, as a most precious gift; this Heaven-sent beam, illuminating with its gracious influence is evident to those on whom it rests:—by its clear line of light the pure soul sees its God. How happy are they who are thus enlightened! It is essential to have purity of heart, if we would draw near to God in prayer;—its presence frees the soul from every vice, from every sin; from all that does not tend towards God. The striving after purity of heart, is but the striving after perfection; and the devil, who is not ignorant of our efforts, opposes them with all his force; he will leave us unmolested in our works of charity—of zeal—of penance,—provided that these works occupy us, and take us out of ourselves; so that they hinder our seeing what is actually passing in the depths of our hearts. It signifies not to the enemy, if our seemingly good actions attract admiration and esteem, if we are but: *Like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful to men.* Could we still seek for a stronger motive than the devices of Satan afford, to make us fervently strive after purity of heart.

II. POINT.

There are various other reasons to incite us to this.

Firstly, care for our own perfection. Purity of heart is a sure means of advancement towards it: without that constant vigilance which it bespeaks how can we escape the effect of

our natural tendencies, and the contagion of sin? how keep free from the corruption of an uncleansed heart? *From such a heart come forth evil thoughts*, says our Blessed Lord, *and evil actions proceed.* The heart of man is the source of all the good, or of all the ill, that we can put into action: "the heart," to use the words of Bossuet, "is the whole man; if this fount be not pure what can it give forth but impure water?" The heart is a root; what will the tree be, if the root is unsound? *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* On our heart then, let us cast a penetrating look; with our own hand we must, if necessary, take the knife and cut down to the quick; so that the remotest fibre of evil may be eradicated. In a tree, it may be enough to prune the branches, in order that it may produce more, and better fruit; but it is not so with the metaphorical tree: the axe must be unpityingly made use of, to cut away, from the very root itself, the unsound portion which is causing spiritual decay. Without purity of heart, there can be no solid virtues. As from the heart proceed all possible forms of vice, so from the heart also proceed all possible forms of virtue;—from the treasury of the heart we can only draw forth that which is laid up therein. All that we can find in an evil heart, is more or less evil. The merit and demerit of our actions, depends on the principle which has given them movement. To what can we compare a heart given up to its own desires? To uncultivated soil—to the field of the slothful man; of which the Holy Spirit speaks: *Behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof.* Amongst the weeds which grow there, how can the wheat fructify and come to maturity? It remains powerless for good, choked up with evil tendencies, the rank produce of such a soil. In it, virtue finding no support, yields before temptation,—

and temptation is the conqueror because it is abetted, where it ought to be resisted.

III. Point.

Without purity of heart, no virtue can be really meritorious.

We have seen that it is purity of heart—the good intention—which constitutes virtue. Let us apply this principle to our actions, to make them meritorious. How can they be the product of a pure intention, if the heart be not pure? Our chief motives, those which determine the course we take, are frequently hidden from ourselves; we do not exercise discernment, or we should see that they are too often, merely natural—human—or vicious. Others praise us for our good deeds perhaps; and even with God looking at us, we pride ourselves on this, though all the while He is judging of them so differently. Our natural disposition, —self-love,—vanity,—human respect,—vain glory,—self-interest,—rivalry,—and other secret passions are mingled with our good works;—the part left for God, after all that is refuse has been subtracted, will be very little:—so will their recompense be. We shall find them worthless, or nearly so, for Heaven; notwithstanding all the trouble they may have cost us. God forbid that they condemn us! How many Christians there are, how many Religious, how many evangelical labourers, who believe themselves rich; who think they have amassed much spiritual wealth, because they have toiled much; they are *nevertheless wretched, and miserable and poor.* God does not count our good actions as good, until they have been weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary; He will examine our motives, and bring to light all those which have sullied our works: to avoid this misfortune can we be too watchful? too mortified?

IV. POINT.

How necessary purity of heart is if we would hold communion with God in prayer.

How can we present ourselves before the God of purity with an impure heart? would it not be a wrong done against His holiness? how could it receive divine impressions? How could that heart be really lifted up in prayer, which is heavy—weighed down—drawn back again to earth, by evil inclinations? and held in captivity by worldly ties? The elevation of the soul to God pre-supposes purity of intention; holy desires after solid virtues, and of possessing Him;—but how reconcile these desires with the tendencies of a heart which is not clean in His Sight; which offers Him constant resistance, and frequent refusals when He calls to repentance. God cannot depose His gifts in a soul that offends His infinite purity. Why is it that amongst so many who make profession of piety, there are so few who receive celestial visits? so few to whom the Lord sends divine consolation? so few who are enlightened on spiritual matters? Let us go down into the deepest recesses of our inner life. Do we not find that we are cold and languishing? full of aridity and disgust perchance, but void of recollectedness and devotion in our exercises of piety, in the reception of the Sacraments, in the Presence of the Adorable Eucharist. If it be so, does it not arise most probably from a want of purity of heart? Are we not suffering the punishment due to our negligence and cowardice about some secret fault? to our culpable connivance with some hidden defect, which finds an asylum in our heart? In the pleasures of the senses, what dangers lurk; of these, one single drop may tarnish a soul and deprive it of its lustre. *Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.* Let us

neither fear nor yield in the presence of any possibility of losing this unspeakable good; but watch over our affections, and love the angelic virtue of chastity, keeping the thought of the reward ever in mind, to be our support and encouragement. These few words, *they shall see God*, are the life of the pure soul. What an incitement! to see God's beauty—greatness—perfection;—to see Him, Who is the Source of all goodness, being, in Himself, the Eternal Good. Did He not say to Moses, when about to manifest Himself to him, *I will shew thee all Good?*

The Day of Retreat in February.

A Religious should be recollected and detached.

I will lead her into the wilderness and will speak to her heart.—Osee ii.

I. Prelude.

Let us penetrate within the sanctuary of the heart of a holy Religious; and perceive the silence that reigns therein. United to God, and detached from all that is of this world, such a one advances every day, from virtue to virtue.

II. Prelude.

Give us, O Lord, a love of solitude, and that holy recollectedness, of which we have need; so that we may listen for Thy divine Words.

I. POINT.

A truly religious person is tranquil-minded, and entirely detached from all that is not God.

A heart which finds its happiness in creatures, cannot be really religious; but the heart which is wholly absorbed in pleasing God, and does not permit itself to be drawn aside by either worldly cares or worldly delights, enjoys true peace. Such should our hearts be; reposing continually in God; seeking Him at all times, and finding Him everywhere; in all things tasting His goodness, and confiding to Him all that concerns us. By these means we shall acquire spiritual freedom and arrive at a high degree of sanctity. And do not let us suppose that such a happy condition is incompatible with our ordinary duties. It has been said of Saint Francis Xavier, that in the midst of his constant and important occupations of mind and body, interiorly he was like a hermit on a solitary rock,—alone, united with God. Other saints also, similarly placed in the world, though not of it, are an evident proof that if we have a real desire of so doing, we shall arrive at the possession of peace and tranquillity within; notwithstanding the busy external employments with which we are charged. To be filled with a sincere longing to gain this holy and happy peacefulness, is it not sufficient for us to know the evils that result from a wandering heart?—and this sincere longing will surely be satisfied, for it will lead us to shun more carefully also the ill effects of a dissipated mind. We may consider three of these hurtful consequences. Firstly, not finding the happiness we seek for within ourselves, we strive to find it in creatures: then quickly follows insensibility of heart and negligence concerning the truths of religion. Secondly, the

unrestful heart, failing to find God, within itself, is quite dependent for its piety on the externals of religion; while they who are recollected feel God everywhere present to them. Even in the midst of the world, a single glance within unites their hearts to Him Who is their all. Thirdly, to many it is troublesome to turn their attention to exercises of piety; they must make a great effort before they can fix it on spiritual things:—happy are they, on the contrary, who experience not self-made difficulties; but can take pleasure at all times in their practices of devotion. Seeing therefore the advantages of possessing holy recollection, let us study to acquire it, for by it we shall ever find in God an inexhaustible treasure of peace and happiness.

II. Point.

How to acquire and practice this recollection.

The way to attain this virtue, is to withdraw our thoughts from all that is vain and useless: to speak only when necessity or charity demands that we should do so. By such means we close the door of our heart to things of earth, and open it to things of Heaven. To maintain in ourselves this spirit of recollection, after having gained it, we should carefully avoid all that could cause us to lose it; such as uncontrolled desires—over-eagerness—and too-natural activity. These, and similar obstacles, must be surmounted; if disquietude, under any form arise, let us tranquillise it by the thought, that God cannot dwell in the midst of a tempest-tossed heart.—It is well to adopt as our own the maxim of Saint Francis de Sales,—"Desire only a few things, and desire these very little". Again, we should not occupy ourselves in affairs with which we are not charged by obedience, or in consequence of the duties of our position in life. All

can acquire and preserve interior peace, and undoubtedly we shall, if we *in patience possess our souls*, enjoy the sweet familiarity of a close friendship with our Lord,—the Lover of our souls—our Heavenly Spouse.

COLLOQUY.

Everlasting praise be to Thee, O God, because in detaching my heart from earthly objects, Thou dost call me to the higher life of union with Thyself, Who art my All. May the Divine Spirit produce in me that spirit of recollection which I need so much; and keep me ever in possession of *the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding.*

RESOLUTION.

To apply myself to the holy practice of recollectedness: therefore I must preserve the spirit of silence,—free my mind from vain and useless thoughts,—and acquit myself of my duties with perfect calmness,—as if in the very Presence of God continually.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY.

I will lead her into the wilderness, and will speak to her heart.

PRAYER.

Soul of Christ.

The Day of Retreat in February.

CONSIDERATIONS.

Living Faith.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth. The just man liveth by faith.—ROM. I.

I. POINT.

A living faith is absolutely necessary to salvation.

We are in this world, only to glorify God; to please Him in all things; and to accomplish His holy Will. *Without faith it is impossible to please God;* impossible for us to fulfil the end of our vocation; impossible to be saved. It is not here a question of mere speculative belief, but of a living, active faith; and if we would please God and gain Heaven, let us show that ours is the *Faith that worketh by charity.* Without this exercise of our faith, all is illusion, all is contradiction, all is condemnation:—yet how many Christians live in this unhappy state; and how many, even of those who have entered into Religion, imitate them. *The just man liveth by faith:* these words are full of deep meaning and should be well pondered. Faith is therefore the life of the just; even as our daily bread preserves our natural life, faith is requisite for our spiritual life: frequent nourishment is necessary both for soul and body. *The just man lives by faith* in another sense:—to preserve animal life

we must inhale the air which surrounds us; so, to preserve life in the soul, it must exist in an atmosphere of faith; breathing in this divine element incessantly. The thoughts of the just are inspired by faith;—his judgment is in accordance with the spirit of faith;—his words are words of faith;—his sentiments are conformable to a right belief;—in fine, it is faith which gives life, and force and energy to the soul. *The just man lives by faith.* It is in meditating these emphatic words of the Apostle, and by living in conformity with the doctrine they set forth, that our faith will become increasingly strong, immovable, and enlightened; it will vivify and sanctify the good works by which it is accompanied; it will cause us to estimate and judge of things according to the manner in which God judges of them. To live by faith is to live the divine Life; and to live this Life, we have but to put into practice that which we have already meditated upon,—purity of heart, or the good intention. If we live in the real spirit of detachment from self,—in the constant Presence of God,—in the accomplishing of His holy Will,—and the obligations of our state, we then live by faith, that true and living faith, of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher.

II. POINT.

Living faith is necessary, in order to surmount the obstacles which oppose our perfection.

How great is the need of Faith, all along our earthly course; encompassed as we are by perils, on every side. Nature and grace are waging a perpetual warfare in us;—and nature finds means of gaining through the corruption of the human heart, great advantages over grace. Within and without, all conspires to be on the side of nature; the

senses, in a thousand ways, flatter and seduce,—the world and its vanities attract—and then deceive. The passions of the heart darken and extinguish the light of reason, and every supernatural virtue,—so that, we fail to discover the danger of evil ways, and the snares of our enemies. Grace, on the contrary finds nothing in us favourable to itself: from the moment that it makes its presence felt, that it raises its voice, nature revolts; prepares for combat, and strives for the mastery. True it is that grace has strong resisting powers; at one time it causes the threats of divine justice to be heard,—at another, the promises of eternal recompense, as the victor's prize. But the evils with which we are menaced, however terrible and fearful they may be, often have little or no effect: they are seen from a distance, and thus the alarm is lessened;—whilst the sacrifices grace demands, the duties it imposes, are immediate sacrifices that may cost us much; the fulfilment of present duties that may be severe and painful. The good that grace promises, although so excellent and eternal, is a spiritual good, and therefore unrecognisable to our senses; it is supernatural, and therefore imperfectly comprehended by us. It is future; we enter into full possession of it only at the end of a long career, which may be thickly strewn with the thorns of mortification, self-renunciation, self-abnegation. The good that nature offers for our acceptance, is a thing of the present, and therefore, so often preferred:—it captivates the senses, entices and invites under the most specious pretexts. In this unequal and dangerous strife, who can assure to grace the victory? It is to be secured by faith alone; which can inspire strength and courage to make the final triumph of grace complete. Without a true faith, grace is vanquished; —with it, there is no fear of defeat. *Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear*

not: it discovers to us the glory of Heaven, and unveils the felicity of the Saints; and the soul, seeing itself in possession of the eternal reward, cries out with the Apostle: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come: By faith we understand* that a moment of suffering is followed by an eternity of bliss! There are indeed in this world, pleasure and distinction, and human glory, and temporal good, which it is possible we could make our own; but these passing advantages may ensnare, —may attach us to earth,—may weaken us in the practice of virtue,—may expose to danger,—may withdraw us from the noble end for which we were created:—of these, therefore, we will make the sacrifice. Such were the sentiments of Moses, such was his faith that, according to the witness Saint Paul bears of him, *He chose rather to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time.* Such being, in fact, the sentiments of all the Saints, in the many combats they had to fight against their spiritual foes, they have armed themselves with the shield of Faith. With this impenetrable shield they repulsed all the darts of their enemies: following their example, let us be always covered by this sacred buckler, so that with them we may triumph also.

III. POINT.

Living faith is necessary for the right discharge of the duties of our holy state.

We must be guided by faith. If it were so, that we had certain active duties, and it might be, at the same time, engrossing duties to perform, indubitably we should lose the pleasure we ought to experience in prayer, and might soon neglect exercises of devotion, if we were not animated by a spirit of lively faith. We should fall away from God,

Who is our Strength—our Light—the Centre of our existence,—and thus perish. How important this consideration is; how worthy of serious meditation. But if we are actuated by faith, we shall understand the necessity of using constantly—perseveringly—means whereby to maintain in ourselves this divine life: it is by prayer, the offspring of faith, that we approach God, and are united to Him. And there is another risk which we run, if not quickened by a living faith; imperceptibly we become insensible to those things, which from their very nature should make a deep and lasting impression on our hearts and minds; often vital truths come to be ignored, because the belief in them is dimmed. There are various causes of the downfall of the once fervent: irreverence,—dissipation,—profanation,—and many others: but by far the most common, and the most dangerous come from the decay of faith. It is a certain fact, that without faith, it is impossible for a person, though constantly surrounded by holy influences, to escape falling into insensibility and routine. To be preserved from these sad consequences, we should continually renew in ourselves this spirit of faith, since we are daily exposed to lose somewhat of it. They who believe themselves to possess it in the highest degree, and firmly established therein, are often seen to lose it; in part, or it may be wholly. Nature is always tending towards its ultimate ruin, and drags the soul, enfeebled by want of faith, along with it unresistingly. What does experience tell us? If, for instance, during the space of ten or twenty years, nature triumphs constantly over grace, what strength is there left to go on with? How difficult to retrace our downward steps! If it gives us so much trouble now, to overcome ourselves on a single point, what will it be when years shall have added their daily increased weight, of infidelity to grace? when we are enslaved more com-

pletely by nature, and are powerless to shake off its chains? We consider the state of the world, and what a spectacle is presented to us: it is submerged by a deluge of wrong, by floods of iniquity.—And what is the cause of this? Want of faith: this is the evil of our day. It forms the sorrows of our holy Mother, the Church. But are we not of the number of those who have been set apart to stem this torrent of destruction, to console the Church and lead souls to God? How can we accomplish the duties of this our vocation, but by the reawakening in ourselves, day by day, hour by hour, that faith which we would enkindle in others; for they should possess it in all its strength and fullness, who would preach it by their words,—their actions,—their lives. Faith has been called "the soul of the soul"; for it is that inner principle, which gives movement to every virtue within us,—animates us in the exercise of religious duties,—and makes us sources of consolation and benediction to others.
